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Outlines of Sermons for Young Men and Young Women

By the Rev. JOSEPH SCHUEN. *Edited by the* Rev. EDMUND J. WIRTH, Ph.D.

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PREFACE.

FATHER Augustine Scherer, the author of a series of excellent volumes of aid and counsel for preachers, writes thus concerning leagues and sodalities: "These associations for Christians of different callings and states of life are to be counted among the fairest blossoms that mark the development of the Church's vitality. They well deserve to be introduced into every congregation, and carefully fostered, since their aim is to promote true Christian principles and a Christian manner of life, and zealously to guard the faithful from the contamination of that moral corruption now invading every rank of society. Their object is also to further the conscientious fulfilment of the duties peculiar to each state of life, and the avoidance of the several dangers appertaining to each, besides giving greater force and efficacy to the performance of religious exercises and good works by the united action of the members."

The associations here spoken of are in fact a source of abundant blessing; they are admirably calculated to maintain and propagate morality and godliness in Christian communities. But if they are to live and flourish amongst us, and exercise a permanent influence for good, it is indispensably necessary to deliver an instruction on the subject at short intervals. In most places where such confraternities are organized a conference is given at certain intervals, either in public or, which is far more preferable, at a meeting from which non-associates are excluded. I have frequently heard the wish expressed for some manual that would assist the preacher in addressing these different sodalities. In truth, there is a lack of such books, for this most important branch of

Catholic homiletics has been comparatively neglected; I have been unable to meet with any books on this particular subject, except an occasional homily in a volume of sermons. Accordingly I set to work to collect building-materials for the use of directors of these associations; I say building-materials advisedly, for the kind reader will not find a finished edifice, complete discourses, in these pages, but simple sketches, or outlines prepared for him to work upon. My reason for choosing to provide the latter rather than the former was in order, on the one hand, to supply as large an amount of material as possible, and on the other, to leave the work of filling in details to the preacher who makes use of this book.

Every one who considers the matter attentively will readily perceive that my task was by no means a light one, as it was necessary to confine myself, in treating each subject, to a narrow compass, if my design was to be carried out. I was, besides, compelled to leave the beaten track, which is smooth and easy to the wayfarer, and to mark out a new path, across a country where only rarely do the footsteps of preceding travelers indicate the right direction to be taken. I must, therefore, beg the kind reader to be lenient in his judgment of the deficiencies of this book. It would afford me heartfelt pleasure should any one, advancing further on the track that I have cleared, produce a really excellent and useful work.

And since "neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. iii. 7), I commend my book to the protection of the Lord, praying Him to bestow on it His blessing, and cause it to bear fruit plentifully for life eternal.

THE AUTHOR.

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PART I.

OUTLINES OF SERMONS FOR YOUNG MEN

1. The Young Man's Aim.

"God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but unto the purchasing of salvation."—1 Thess. v. 9.

MAN lives but a short time here below; and when his time is over, he passes away. "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebr. ix. 27). A few hours later, they come and place the remains of the departed in a poor, narrow house made of six boards, and carry him to the churchyard, where they lower him into the grave prepared for him, and shovel the earth in upon him. Then all depart and leave the dead man alone with the dead... Is it all over with him now? Faith answers: "No, there is a life beyond the grave, a life of eternal happiness or of eternal misery." If this is true, how foolish is the man who regards only this life and loses sight of the eternal one! Our end is not in this life; eternity is our goal, an eternity of never-ending happiness. This truth we are about to consider a little more fully. The end and object of a young man's life is

I. To reach heaven
II. Through earth's pilgrimage.

PART I.

1. To reach heaven—this is the true end of a Christian young man; after this the human heart yearns. Every man desires to be happy. All his

thoughts, all his exertions are directed to this. Yet here, in this land of exile and tribulation, lasting and perfect happiness can never be found. To-day the roses blossom, to-morrow they hang withered upon the stem. "Laughter shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy" (Prov. xiv. 13). Yes, even when a man possesses and is able to enjoy all that the world offers, he does not find true happiness; he wearies of the enjoyment of pleasures which, like honey when partaken of freely, produce satiety. "I said in my heart: I will go, and abound in delights, and enjoy good things. And I saw that this also was vanity" (Eccles. ii. 1). Hence it follows as a natural consequence that the human heart yearns for a better, an abiding happiness: this is heaven. There we hope to find unbroken, everlasting felicity. Consequently heaven, for which the human heart yearns so fervently, must be our final, our true goal.

There is another argument which proves conclusively that heaven is the true end of our existence. God has destined us for it. God, our sovereign Lord and Master, has appointed the end which he intends us to reach—that end is heaven. How do we know this? We know it because He has promised heaven to us. The words spoken by God are eternal truth; they cannot deceive us. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass" (Matt.. xxiv. 35). God has assured us in the most solemn manner by the lips of the apostles that we are destined for heaven. "God hath appointed us unto the purchasing of eternal

salvation" (1 Thess. v. 9). "God will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4). "The God of all grace hath called us unto His eternal glory" (1 Pet. v. 10).

This is also evident from all that God has done in regard to man. He has sent his only-begotten Son. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son" (Gal. iv. 4). And for what purpose did He send Him? That with the key of the cross He might unlock the gates of heaven, and amid tears and anguish bring back the lost sheep and clasp them to His paternal Heart. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8).

He instituted His holy Church. The Son of God founded a Church, and gave to that Church His Holy Spirit, His Heart, and His Gospel, endowing it also with all the merits which He had won by His life and cruel death. This Church is the vessel of grace and the harbor of salvation; borne by her over the ocean of time, we shall reach the kingdom of heaven and attain to everlasting life. (St. Cyril, Cat. Myst. xviii. 24).

2. Heaven, the young man's ultimate end, is a fair and glorious end. God, being in Himself eternal love and mercy, could not have appointed anything bad or worthless as the final end of man.

Our goal is unconceivably glorious and beautiful, for in heaven there are no thorns. Our holy faith, speaking of heaven, teaches that there is no sorrow there, no tears nor mourning. "God shall wipe away

all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow" (Apoc. xxi. 4). St. Augustine tells us that from heaven every misery is banished. Consequently, there is no affliction of body or soul, no piercing thorns, nothing that can distress. How beautiful the world would be if there were no pain, no cross to bear! This is the case in heaven.

Heaven is, moreover, the land of unending joy and happiness. There the roses never fade. "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house" (Ps. xxxv. 9). "It shall be exceedingly an eternal weight of joy" (2 Cor. iv. 17). "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). "In the garden of paradise unfading roses bloom." (St. Aug.) As the fish in the ocean is surrounded with water, so the elect are immersed in an unfathomable sea of bliss, and experience infinite happiness. Behold, Christian young men, your goal, your true aim! But how are we to reach this glorious end?

PART II.

1. We are to reach heaven by journeying through earth's pilgrimage, for this is the path to heaven. God has ordained that we strive to win heaven, that we earn heaven as a reward. For this purpose He has placed us on earth and enjoined upon us as our task that we so pass through things temporal as to become worthy of things eternal. Our life upon earth is,

therefore, the path to heaven, which we must pursue courageously.

Faith teaches us that the road which leads to heaven is a steep and rugged one, encompassed by formidable foes. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence" (Matt. xi. 12). Our Lord speaks of the "burden and heats of the day" (Matt. xx. 12); and St. Paul tells us that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Ephes. vi. 12). "The whole world is seated in wickedness" (1 John v. 19). Therefore it requires courage if we would walk by this road to heaven—courage to bear with patience the hardships and trials of this world—courage to resist and conquer the enemies who come to meet us with drawn swords, and who endeavor to deter us from pursuing our journey to the end. Woe betide him who lacks courage! Woe betide him who deems too difficult and laborious what God requires of him, and who allows the enemies of his salvation to triumph over him! This life is the path to heaven and we must pursue it successfully.

It is by no means sufficient to walk along the road bravely for a time; we must finish our course, and finish it victorious. Of what use is it for one in a race to keep ahead of the others for a time, and then to stand still or even to turn back before the race is finished? Just as little does it profit a man to go forward courageously on his way to heaven for a time, and then to weary and to turn aside into the easier and smoother road which leads to hell. Witness the

fate of Saul and Judas. "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22). "Be thou faithful unto death: and I will give thee the crown of life" (Apoc. ii. 10). They who do not persevere can expect no reward.

2. Our life is the seed-time for the heavenly harvest. "What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap" (Gal. vi. 8). "He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth in blessings, shall also reap blessings" (2 Cor. ix. 6).

Every man must sow the seed of heaven. If the husbandman forgets to till the soil and sows no seed, he cannot look for a harvest. When the autumn comes he can leave sickle and scythe untouched, for he will have no need of them. Our hearts are the field which we must cultivate to obtain fruit for heaven. In these hearts we must sow good seed, the seed of pious resolutions. Then this seed will bring forth, in the warm rays of divine grace, the most beautiful blossoms, and the fairest fruit: humility, meekness, charity. Blessed is the man who tills this field assiduously! Blessed is he who "in the morning sows his seed, and in the evening lets not his hand cease" (Eccles. xi. 6). Blessed is he who is "zealous for that which is good always" (Gal. iv. 18).

It is also necessary to watch the crops carefully. It is by no means sufficient to plough a field and to scatter the seed. The crops may come up and look promising, the grain may even begin to ripen; but how easily and how speedily all may be destroyed, if the husbandman have no care of it. Animals may

break into the enclosure of the field and make sad havoc there; malicious men may enter and trample the crops under foot or carry them off. The same is true as regards the fruit we grow for eternal life. We must watch carefully over its growth and development, guard it against injury from man or beast. The beasts are our passions: anger, revenge, impurity, drunkenness. The spiritual crops are ruined if but one single beast breaks in—if but one passion is indulged. Recall the story of David (2 Kings xi. 1-18). The men against whom we must be on our guard are evil companions, undesirable friends, who by their conversation and their bad example do us incalculable harm, and ruin in a comparatively short time a heart that was in the best of dispositions. "Take ye heed, watch and pray" (Mark xiii. 33). "Let us not sleep, but let us watch" (1 Thess. v. 6). Happy is he whose garner is filled with sheaves, who can appear before his judge rich in good works! To him will be addressed the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant; I will place thee over many things; enter into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv. 23).

Now, Christian young men, you know the purpose of your existence. It is to reach heaven by means of this earthly life. To attain to the possession of heaven is your true, your glorious aim. Millions before you have reached this end. "I saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" (Apoc. vii. 9).

May it be your happy lot also. The way is open to you in this life, for this life is the path that leads to heaven; this is the seed-time for the heavenly harvest. You must pursue your way bravely to the end; you must scatter the seed diligently, and carefully watch it grow. Alas, a thousand times alas, for him who does not trouble himself about advancing towards heaven, but runs in the way wherein unfortunately so many choose to go! He will reach a goal, it is true, but not the one which God has appointed for him, not the one where everlasting happiness awaits him; but a goal where with bitter tears he will exclaim: "We have erred from the way of truth; we have wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and darkness, but the way of the Lord we have not known" (Wisd. v. 6, 7). He will reach a land of misery and destruction, where "the shadow of death and everlasting horror dwelleth." Wherefore let us go forward towards the celestial goal; let us advance in the way of salvation which God appointed for us; let us go in the way of virtue and piety. If the ungodly deride us, let us not be troubled by this; if all about us should go another way, let this not confuse us. Let us labor for God and eternity. Let us sow the seed of eternal life, the seed of good works. Thus we shall draw nearer day by day to the end for which we strive, thus shall be prepared the harvest for the last day; and when the day comes that shall close our eyes to this world, we shall open them upon the beauties of heaven.

2. The Crown of Virtues.

"Every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown."—1 Cor. ix. 25.

WHAT great value men attach to a prize! What will they not do and risk for the sake of it! "Every one," says the Apostle, "that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may obtain a corruptible crown." St. Paul takes his illustration from the ancient games, where the prize consisted of a wreath. What efforts those men made for a wreath that would soon be withered and gone! Even the more durable crown of a monarch, made of gold and precious stones, is but a corruptible crown. Many a ruler retired at night as a mighty king and woke up in the morning with all his regal splendor gone. Witness Louis Philippe of France, and Napoleon III. There is, however, a crown which is incorruptible, and which should adorn the brow of every Christian young man, a crown which gleams brightly in the sight of God and of His holy angels, which no power in the whole world, not even the hand of death, can wrest from you. It is, too, within the power of each of you to obtain, and it is of this crown that I wish to speak to-day. We shall consider

I. Of what it consists; and

II. How precious it is.

PART I.

The crown which should adorn a Christian young man consists of three pearls set in a circle of gold.

1. The Pearls. The first of these is purity. Purity consists in overcoming the concupiscence of the flesh, and in preserving the body as well as the soul free from every stain of uncleanness. Consequently the eyes must be pure, the hands must be pure, the thoughts must be pure, the tongue must be pure, the heart itself must be pure. "The flesh must be crucified" (Gal. v. 24). Purity is a radiant pearl in the crown of the Christian. "O Chastity," exclaims St. Athanasius, "thou costly pearl, how few are they that find thee!" And St. Ephrem says, "Chastity is a celestial rose, a blossom of spring, which blooms in the midst of the soul, and the perfume of its virtue diffuses a delicious fragrance, and imparts to the dwelling-place, the human body, an irresistible charm and attraction."

The second pearl is obedience. Obedience consists in submitting to what is commanded by superiors and willingly fulfilling their behest. The son who has a docile heart will cheerfully comply with his parents' wishes; the employee with those of his employer, the servant with those of his master; and the young man obeys in all that is not contrary to conscience. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov. i. 8). "Servants, be subject to your masters" (1 Pet. ii. 18). Obedience and docility are a shining pearl in the young man's crown. The Spirit of God, speaking of obedience,

says, "It will be a grace to his head and a chain of gold to his neck" (Prov. i. 9). Obedience is the summary of perfection and of the whole Christian life.

The third pearl is humility. Humility consists in not desiring that preference be shown to oneself, but rather choosing the lowest place, and yielding precedence to others. A humble man does not boast of his talents, nor talk of the creditable actions he has performed; he does not laugh at another or hold him up to ridicule because he is less gifted by God than himself. "Young man, scarcely speak in thine own cause. If thou be asked twice, let thy answer be short. In many things be as if thou wert ignorant, and hear in silence" (Ecclus. xxxii. 10-12). "Let another praise thee, and not thy own mouth; a stranger and not thy own lips" (Prov. xxvii. 2). Such is the counsel of the Wise Man. Humility is a brilliant pearl. "Glory shall uphold the humble of spirit" (Prov. xxix. 23). Humility gives its due place and its due measure to every other virtue; it imparts beauty and durability to all. It is the teacher of morals. Let us now consider

2. The circle of gold. The circle of gold in which the pearls are set is the love of God. This is the sum total of all that is beautiful, of all that is an ornament to man in the sight of God. Charity gives value to all the other virtues. Where charity is lacking every other virtue loses its brilliance. Hear what the Apostle says: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. And if I

should have prophecy and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2). On the other hand, in the light of charity every virtue shines brightly, especially the three pearls that form your crown, purity, obedience, and humility; for it is only when you practise these virtues out of love of God that they acquire a heavenly value. What the sun is to the planets, that charity is to the other virtues. The planets obtain their light from the sun, and charity makes perfect the deeds of virtue. Charity, moreover, enriches its owner with all manner of treasures. It is in itself a jewel of infinite value. In the Gospel we read of a merchant who found a precious gem and went and sold all to buy it. This costly gem is charity, without which nothing that you possess will be of any use to you. "But if you only have charity you will be rich enough" (St. Aug.). Charity is the source of all merit. All virtues and works of supernatural value spring from charity; through charity they grow and increase and obtain merit for us.

This is the crown, the crown of virtues, which should adorn every Christian young man; it is composed of the three pearls, purity, obedience, and humility, set in the golden circle of divine charity. Ask yourselves if you possess this crown. Do you each and all possess it? Are you chaste, obedient, and humble; does the love of God dwell in your heart and prompt your actions? Happy indeed are you if this

be the case. Unfortunately there are to-day many young men who are without this adornment, and who care little about possessing it. They are men given to impurity, self-willed, filled with pride and conceit; men who are totally destitute of the least spark of the love of God. "Many walk of whom I have told you they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame" (Phil. iii. 18, 19).

PART II.

1. This crown of virtues is exceedingly precious; it is of incomparable value. Here we must as a matter of course look upon things with the eye of faith; we must measure them by the rule of faith and weigh them in the balance of Christ's teachings. If we do this, we will realize that this crown has an incalculable value, and that all else that the world holds dear sinks into insignificance beside it.

All the honors of the world cannot compare with it. Medals and decorations, public applause, high positions and dignities, how all these things are esteemed by the world! For them men sacrifice their money, their time, their ease, their conscience. Yet human glory and renown is nothing but a dream, a shadow, a mere phantom, a fleeting vapor; for when the sound of it dies away, the memory of it is lost. On the other hand, virtue is no mere dream, no shadow, no vapor, no illusion; it confers real honor upon him who possesses it, and all the hosts of heaven look

down upon him with delight. "Virtue," says St. Bernard, "is the stepping-stone to honor, the parent of true nobility."

All the riches of the world cannot compare with this crown. To have gold and silver, houses and lands, fields and forests, in a word, to possess property and to be wealthy is frequently regarded by the world as the greatest gift that man can possess. The crown of virtues is, however, of infinitely superior value. Earthly riches are but dust and ashes; "they shall not profit in the day of revenge" (Prov. xi. 4). Whereas the crown of virtues is genuine gold. It is this that makes men truly rich.

2. This crown is of imperishable value. No power can rob us of it. On the other hand, how unstable are the crowns of princes! A war breaks out, a revolution takes place, and thrones totter, kingdoms are overthrown, and crowns fall. No power can deprive the Christian of his crown, neither the world, nor yet the devil; for the world is impotent to harm him if he place himself under the protection of the Most High and arm himself with the weapons of faith. The powers of earth and the hosts of hell may advance with all their might, with a thousand hands stretched out to snatch from him the precious crown, yet all their efforts shall be futile. He may, however, of his own free will cast away the glorious crown that adorns his brow; and he does this when he does not resist hell, when he yields to the promptings of the flesh, in short, when he commits a mortal sin. "If thou comest near to sin, they will lay hands upon thee"

(Ecclus. xxi. 3), and they will tear the crown from thee. But against thy will no power can prevail.

Not even death can wrest this crown from us. At the hour of death all worldly glory comes to an end; from every princely head the bold hand of death snatches the crown. Scarcely is the king dead when the insignia of his office are laid at the feet of another; another assumes the crown and reigns in his place. Whereas the man who has led a pious and virtuous life takes his crown with him into eternity, and appears with it before the judgment-seat of his Lord. At that dread tribunal it will be exchanged for a crown of glory. "The just live for evermore, and their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them with the Most High. Therefore they shall receive a crown of beauty" (Wisd. v. 16, 17). This beautiful crown is the "crown of life" (James i. 12), "the crown of justice" (2 Tim. iv. 8).

God grant that you who have listened to me may adorn yourselves with this crown. It is composed of three jewels and a golden circle. The jewels are purity, obedience, and humility. The golden circle is the love of God. This crown is infinitely precious; no earthly crown can compare with it. Its chief excellence is this, that it is incorruptible; it can never perish; it endures for all eternity. Take first of all the circle of gold, divine charity. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart and with thy soul, and with thy whole strength" (Mark xii. 30). And in this circle insert the three pearls: purity, obedience, and humility; and your crown will be com-

plete. "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. vi. 12). "Obey your prelates and be subject unto them" (Hebr. xiii. 17). "Not minding high things but consenting to the humble. Be not wise in your own conceits" (Rom. xii. 16).

3. The Altar of the Heart.

"*Build an altar to the Lord.*"—2 Kings xxiv. 18.

We read that when the waters of the deluge had subsided and the face of the earth was once more dry, Noe with his family left the ark and determined to give thanks to the Most High, who had preserved them from destruction in so wonderful a manner. With solemn ceremonies, "Noe built an altar to the Lord, and taking of all the cattle and fowls that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar" (Gen. viii. 20). This is the first instance of erecting an altar mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures. Later on we are told of countless altars erected to the King of heaven and of sacrifices offered to Him. We know too that the Catholic Church, wherever her influence extends, erects altars and upon them renews day by day that great mystery once offered on Calvary. My purpose in relating all this is that I wish to impress upon you to-day the necessity for each and every one of you of erecting such an altar to God. You perhaps think this a singular idea; but I shall endeavor to make my meaning clear to you. I mean that your heart should become an altar from which the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving ascends continually to God. For this purpose we shall consider

I. How you are to build this altar;
II. How you are to decorate it.

PART I.

1. Two things are required for building an altar to God; one of these is preparation. Whatever the nature of the structure to be erected, some preparation is necessary; the site is cleared, everything is removed that might be an obstruction in the way of building, or that might interfere with the appearance of the structure. The same must be done in building the altar of the spiritual life in your heart. The first thing to be done is to clear the site, by removing the rubbish. You must not erect that altar in an unsightly place, in a swamp, or amid the mud of a highway, for it is to be dedicated to almighty God, and must be erected on a clean spot. By rubbish and dirt we mean wordly-mindedness. All that the world has to offer is worth nothing in the sight of God and can be esteemed as so much dirt. Hence we must begin by eliminating the love of the world. "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world" (1 John ii. 15). "Be not conformed to the world" (Rom. xii. 2). Let us then put away the dirt of the world, and clean our hearts of its rubbish. Let us put away the maxims of the world, the pride of the world, the desire to please the world, the pleasures and amusements of the world.

After we have cleansed the site for the altar by removing the rubbish, we must go to work to exterminate the reptiles that infest the place. It is im-

possible for the Lord to take pleasure in an altar erected in a place that abounds with snakes and vipers, toads and scorpions, and other loathsome reptiles. We must rid our soul of them, for by these reptiles we understand impurity in all its forms, evil thoughts, desires, words, and deeds. "Wicked abominations, every form of creeping things" (Ezech. viii. 9, 10), as the prophet calls them. Do away with these "creeping things." Listen to the advice of Tobias to his son: "Take heed to keep thyself, my son, from all fornication" (Tob. iv. 13). Evil thoughts and desires lead to it.

2. When the preparations are made, the site cleared, all the rubbish removed and the reptiles destroyed, then proceed to the building of the altar. According to the will of the Church an altar consists of a single slab of stone anointed with oil by the hand of the bishop. After this model erect your altar. You will need an altar stone and oil. Choose a stone of the most excellent kind and oil of the best quality.

The altar stone should be of the best kind. It represents sanctifying grace, "a chief cornerstone, elect, precious" (1 Pet. ii. 6). Sanctifying grace is the foundation and the source of all heavenly gifts and graces. Where it is wanting, death reigns; where it enters, it quickens and vivifies. It makes us children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Hence it is the noblest gift which the "Father of lights" can bestow upon us. He who possesses it is ennobled by it, and if he be but an ordinary day-laborer, earning his bread by the sweat of his brow, nay, if he be

reduced to beggary, he is immensely rich. If you would erect a worthy altar to God, you must first of all procure this precious stone. But where are you to find it? You have received it in Baptism. It was then that God elevated you to the supernatural state of sanctifying grace. "You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11). If you still possess this treasure, keep it, watch over it carefully, guard it as a king would guard his crown, or a mother her child. And if you have had the misfortune to lose it, then it can be won back by sincere penance.

Besides the altar stone you need oil of the best quality. Holy oil is poured on the altar stone, which is thereby consecrated to God. This sacred oil must by no means be wanting on the altar of your heart. By oil we understand purity of intention. This sanctifies all that we do and transforms that which without it would be but earthly into what is heavenly; so that it will ascend to the throne of God like a precious perfume and be acceptable to Him. St. Ambrose says: "The most trifling actions, if performed in a spirit of charity, that is, with a pure intention, are precious as refined gold; they become, as it were, divine." Wherefore take the oil of good intention and pour it upon your altar. "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). "Whatever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. iii. 17). "Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Col. iii. 23).

PART II.

The Catholic Church decorates her altars with lights, flowers, and a carpet. The cross is put in the center, and before the altar perpetually burns a lamp to indicate the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The altar which we have built should be adorned in a similar manner.

1. In the center the cross must stand. The cross of Christ should occupy the chief place in our souls; it should always be in the innermost part of our heart. To bring this about we must love above all things our crucified Lord and Master. Does He not deserve our love? Has He not first loved us, and that with a love that knows no limits? "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1). "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). Stand beside the crib, take your place beneath the cross, and you will see what great love God had for us. We must then love the Saviour more than brother or sister, more than father or mother, more than ourselves or any one in the world. How do we show this love of Jesus? "If any man love Me, he will keep My word" (John xiv. 23). "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (ibid. 21). If we love Christ we will sacrifice every thing for His sake. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). These few words express the greatness of the love which God had for us. Such love deserves a return on our part.

Let us sacrifice everything for His sake and avoid everything that may be displeasing to Him, however difficult to do this it may at first seem to us.

2. On each side of the cross are flowers and lights. Lights are placed upon the altar to indicate the light of faith, the most beautiful light that ever shone upon the earth, more beautiful by a thousand times than the light of the sun, moon, or stars. Hence the faithful are said "to walk in the light of faith" (1 John i. 7). They are called "children of the light" and "children of the day" (1 Thess. v. 5). This light must be placed upon the altar of the heart, to burn there forever; that is, we must be steadfast and immovable in the faith. Oh, take heed that you keep the faith amid the dangers that surround you in the days of unbelief; hold it fast, though the world make shipwreck of it. Keep the faith, even when many a companion round about you falls away from it; even though your best friend or nearest relative should become unbelieving. Besides the light of faith there is the light of good example which we must place upon our altar. Good example shines like a light before the footsteps of men. "You are the light of the world. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 14-16). This light is to be placed upon the altar of the heart by the side of the light of faith. I mean you ought not only to believe, but you must also live

up to your faith, and be an example to others in virtue and good works. This is not an easy task in a world such as it is, but remember that if you have the courage necessary for this you shall also receive the reward of a hero.

Flowers also are placed upon the altar. Of these two kinds are especially suitable for your altar. The first of these is the lily. The lily is the symbol of purity, and as such is the most graceful ornament for the heart of a young man. "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). The other flower best suited for you is the violet, the symbol of humility. The two go naturally together; it is pride that most directly disposes to impurity; and it is humility that protects chastity.

3. At the foot of the altar a carpet is laid. A carpet must also be spread before the altar of our heart, for it denotes obedience. The carpet is trodden under foot, and so obedience is subject to the commands of others. Like the carpet, obedience is willing to occupy the lowest place. Let us spread the carpet of obedience in our heart, let sons obey their parents, servants their masters. "My son, keep the commandments of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them in thy heart continually, and put them about thy neck. When thou walkest, let them go with thee; and when thou awakest, talk with them" (Prov. vi. 20-22). "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not serving the eye, as pleasing men, but in simplicity of heart, fearing God" (Col. iii. 22).

4. A lamp burns continually before the altar. The lamp sheds a soft light upon the altar by day and by night; it signifies devotion. We should take delight in prayer. Prayer is an elevation of the heart to God, and may be said to resemble Our Lord's Ascension into heaven; by it we mount to heaven in spirit. It casts a halo around the Christian. What a beautiful spectacle to the angels of heaven is a Christian rapt in prayer, especially if he is a young man with a pure heart! Be diligent in prayer, pray every morning and every evening, pray at least for a few moments in the course of the day, and let the Sunday be sanctified by prayer.

Be recollected in prayer. Prayer offered amid a thousand wilful distractions cannot be pleasing to God. "This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Mark vii. 6). A prayer of this nature resembles a lamp whose wick is charred, and which consequently emits a disagreeable odor. Be careful to pray with recollection. This it not easy; yet if one has a good will and takes a little pains, with the help of God's grace the difficulties can be overcome.

To-day we have considered the virtues which should adorn the heart of a Christian young man, and we have represented them under the figure of an altar to be built to God. Would that every one here to-day would build such an altar as I have described! You know now what is required in the way of material; you have also heard how it should be adorned. You must first prepare the site by removing all the rubbish

and exterminating the reptiles that may be found in your heart. Then you begin the building, using the altar stone of sanctifying grace and pouring upon it the pure oil of good intention. This point reached, you adorn the altar with the light of faith and good example, placing in the middle the cross of Christ. You put on the flowers of chastity and humility and spread beneath it the carpet of obedience. Before it burns continually the lamp of devotion. Thus you will erect a glorious altar; one which will correspond to St. John's description of the heavenly Jerusalem —"Having the glory of God, and the light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper stone, even as crystal" (Apoc. xxi. 11).

4. The Young Man's Amusements.

"*Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice.*"—Ps. xxxi. 11.

A VERY clear picture is given in the Book of Wisdom of the way in which only too many young men enjoy life and seek pleasure. "Come, let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered; let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury; let us everywhere leave tokens of our joy." And Holy Scripture adds: "These things they thought, and were deceived; for their own malice blinded them. They knew not the secrets of God, nor esteemed the honor of holy souls" (Wisd. ii. 6-9; xxi. 22). On hearing this you might perhaps wonder if you are to be deprived of every joy and pleasure. You might be inclined to ask if your life is to be one of sadness and gloom. It is to answer this question that I address you to-day. I am about to speak of the Christian young man's amusements and pleasures; and they are of two kinds:

I. Those that are lawful; and
II. Those that are forbidden.

PART I.

1. Let us in the first place discuss the pleasures that are lawful. In what do they consist? No one can blame you for amusing yourselves, provided you do so in a legitimate manner. This will be the case if your pleasures are innocent. Those pleasures are innocent which involve no danger of sin or scandal, and which are free from danger to health or waste of money, and do not interfere with your duties in life. There are many pleasures of this description; as, for instance, a walk through the woods or fields, a visit to a good friend, the reading of a good and instructive book, an hour spent in music or singing, a game of ball or tennis, and many other similar pastimes.

Another condition upon which the innocence of your amusements depends is, that you should enjoy them in moderation. All excess is bad, and displeasing to God. Even the best things become evil when carried to excess, just as a most salutary medicine if taken in too large doses becomes a poison. Hence it follows that any diversion indulged in must be enjoyed in moderation. Be on your guard against acquiring a passion for amusements. St. Francis de Sales says: "There is nothing sinful in making merry at times in a harmless way, but we must beware of loving amusements too much." Many people begin by indulging freely in diversions, gradually they become enslaved by them, and end by pursuing them with intense passion. This is not the way in which we are to seek amusements; we are told, "Lust shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it"

(Gen. iv. 7). Be on your guard also against loss of time. We should not turn to amusements until all the duties of our station in life are performed; our amusements should not encroach on our time too much; neither should they be prolonged until late at night. "See, therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly, redeeming the time" (Ephes. v. 15).

Your amusements to be lawful must be taken with a good intention. The Christian ought not give himself up to mirth merely for the enjoyment of it; he ought to have a higher purpose. The Apostle bids us "Mind the things that are above" (Col. iii. 2). Again he says, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). Therefore, let a good intention inspire even your amusements and pleasures. Enjoy yourselves because it is the will of God that you should take recreation after a hard day's work, and let not the mere love of pleasure be the moving spirit of your recreation.

2. We have seen what pleasures are lawful, we will now briefly consider the reason why they are lawful. They are permitted by religion. Of this we have definite and unequivocal assurance in the Holy Scriptures: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart be in that which is good" (Eccles. xi. 9). "Rejoice in the Lord, again I say, rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4). We must allow the mind as well as the body refreshment and recreation occasionally; he who would not allow himself or others a little pleasure now and then deserves censure rather than praise. David the king rejoiced with great joy (1 Par. xxix. 9). In

the Book of Judith we read that after the great victory all the people were joyful in the sight of the sanctuary (Jud. xvi. 24). On the return of the prodigal son, Our Lord Himself tells us the father brought out the fatted calf and a great feast was made (Luke xv. 23). Likewise we read in the lives of St. Charles Borromeo, St. Aloysius, St. Francis de Sales and other saints that they allowed themselves innocent pleasures. Our Lord Himself, the teacher and pattern of mankind, did not despise going to the wedding-feast of Cana.

Furthermore, proper recreation is productive of much good. It is beneficial to the body. Incessant labor and exertion exhaust the forces of the body, and recreation becomes a necessity for the repairing of our strength. A bow that is always bent loses its elasticity; so a man who takes no recreation will succumb to fatigue. Rest and recreation renew the body and maintain its power of endurance.

Recreation is also good for the soul. As a gentle rain at night revives and refreshes the thirsty earth parched by the heat of the midday sun, even so innocent amusements recruit and refresh the mind fatigued with the duties of one's calling. The soul may benefit by innocent recreation, which when taken in the proper manner becomes meritorious and deserving of eternal reward. St. Paul tells us that even drinking and eating can become supernatural acts. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do it all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31).

Let your amusements, then, be always of the right

kind; let them be innocent, i. e., free from sin; enjoy them in moderation and with a good intention. Religion does not forbid pleasures of this kind, and they may be of great value to you for body and soul. Your conscience will have no cause to reproach you for them; they may even become a source of eternal reward. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart be in that which is good."

PART II.

1. We will now speak of the forbidden pleasures. What are the forbidden pleasures? They are dangerous amusements. Among the amusements that are accompanied with danger we may mention in the first place card-playing. In itself an innocent amusement, it quickly degenerates into gambling and sin. It is an amusement in which moderation is difficult. This is especially true of certain games. These games lend themselves easily to playing for money, interest increases and the small sums soon become large stakes. Usually the young man who began to play for recreation ends by playing above his means; the passion grows and he becomes a gambler. These games are too often prolonged into the late hours of the night or even the early hours of the morning; no recreation is obtained; but on the contrary, greater fatigue is the result. These games, too, keep young men from attending Mass on Sundays; they keep them from their duties. Listen to what St. Francis de Sales, the kindest of men, says about card-playing: "Games of this nature are called recreation, and they

are invented to serve that purpose, yet they do not by any means serve the purpose for which they were invented, for as a matter of fact they are nothing but a severe mental strain. Look at the players,— what can be more sombre and gloomy than the attention they pay to the game? No one dares speak a word, or laugh while it is going on; nay, one can hardly cough for fear of causing vexation or giving offence. And after all, the whole pleasure consists in winning money. Is not that a reprehensible pleasure which consists in winning at the expense of one's companions? Truly one cannot recommend so ignoble a gratification."

The frequenting of taverns and saloons must also be mentioned with the forbidden pleasures. Is it wrong to take a drink when one is thirsty, especially after long working-hours? By no means; you are at perfect liberty to do this, but you must also remember that frequenting drinking-places, especially when doing so becomes habitual, is extremely dangerous. "Behold joy and gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die" (Is. xxii. 13). This is the maxim of the world; but the Wise Man says of wine that "it will bite like the snake, and will spread abroad poison like the basilisk" (Prov. xxiii. 32). But it is especially the company that you are thrown among in the saloon which is dangerous. There you hear unprincipled suggestions, evil conversations, and this corrupting influence sinks deep into your heart. Disputes arise, curses are heard, brawls ensue. A young man with a Catholic

education ought to feel that this is not the company for him. To the evil effects of frequenting saloons experience testifies only too clearly.

Besides dangerous amusements, there are also sinful amusements. A considerable portion of amusements to-day are of such a nature that it is impossible to take part in them without proximate danger of sin. Dancing is one of these. While dancing in itself is not in the least objectionable, yet if we consider how dances are for the most part conducted, and the consequences which not unfrequently follow them, we must come to the conclusion that dancing is at least dangerous, if not sinful. The Fathers of the Church condemn dancing in the strongest terms, and St. Charles Borromeo denounces it as a snare into which the devil leads the young. Dancing is seldom free from an element of danger. The same may be said of the theater as it is to-day, especially in the larger cities. It is generally a school of vice and impurity. There one hears the worst principles enunciated and vice glorified. By its means the poison of sin made attractive is imbibed, and the passions are inflamed. A decent play is well enough, but where do you find decent plays to-day, plays that have not at least something objectionable in them?

2. These amusements are forbidden because they lead to many sins. Card-playing often leads to cursing and blasphemy, it leads to quarreling, to neglect of duty, to disregard for the sanctity of the Sunday, to angering one's parents, to deceit and theft. And dancing! Think of the many foolish thoughts and

impure desires on the part of those heated by the dance, of the conversations often held during or in consequence of the dance, of the sins committed after leaving the ballroom. All these sins are treasured up by the devil, not one is forgotten by him, but all will one day be brought forward in evidence before the judgment-seat of God, by "The accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night" (Apoc. xii. 10).

Many sins are committed through indulgence in unlawful pleasures, and many souls perish on account of them. Is not sin the death of the soul? And the soul which is in sin is a prey to hell. Our Lord said: "If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth" (John xv. 6). "He who is carried away by sin is swallowed up in hell." (St. Gregory.) Oh, how many are now burning in hell because they did not listen to warnings against improper amusements!

I entreat you therefore, young men, take no part in unlawful pleasures. There is a terrible retribution in store for those who crave only amusements and pleasures, and drink of the cup, wreathed in flowers, which the world holds out to them. We read of the children of Jambri that their marriage "was turned into mourning, and the noise of their musical instruments into lamentations" (1 Mach. ix. 41). It will be so with you if you pursue and take delight in reprehensible enjoyments. They will end in tears in this world, and will occasion more tears hereafter, bitter tears in

purgatory, if not in hell. Yet we are told "Honest mirth pleases heaven and earth." The saying is good and true; but mark, it is about *honest* mirth. But it is not honest mirth to tell or to listen to improper stories, habitually to frequent saloons, to love the ballroom and the resort of pleasure more than the house of God. It is not honest mirth to turn night into day, seeking questionable amusements and unfitting oneself for the duties of one's calling. Such amusements are ignoble and reprehensible, they are unworthy of a Christian gentleman; they are not approved either by God or upright men; they bring nothing but shame and sin in their wake. But other people, you may say, are not so scrupulous about them. That may be, but you must remember that you are living in a world of sin, and many there are who have received little, if any, Christian instruction. Does not Our Lord speak of the broad and easy road and of the many who travel upon it? Do you imagine that if following their example leads you to purgatory, or, worse, to hell, that these people whose example you have followed will come down to dry your tears of repentance or despair? No, that will never be. Hold aloof, then, from participating in their ungodly pleasures, and you will smooth your dying pillow. Then, when the last hour is come, you will have less cause to dread the account you must give before the tribunal of eternal justice.

5. Christ, the Young Man's Shepherd.

"*I am the Good Shepherd.*"—John x. 14.

One of the most beautiful pictures of Our Lord is that of the Good Shepherd. We see Him therein wearing the shepherd's hat upon His head and holding the shepherd's crook in His hand. Round about Him are His flock, lying at His feet, and in His arms He carries the lost sheep. This representation recalls to our minds the words which Jesus spoke of Himself: "I am the Good Shepherd, and I know Mine and Mine know me; and I lay down My life for My sheep" (John x. 14, 15). This pleasing picture will be the theme of our instruction to-day. We will consider

I. The Shepherd, and
II. The sheep.

PART I.

1. Christ is the Shepherd, and the most illustrious of shepherds by reason of His descent. Christ is descended from all that is noblest and highest. The nobler the house of which a man is a descendant, the more exalted is that man's rank. Christ has the most exalted origin; He Himself tells us this: "No man hath ascended into heaven, but the Son of man who is in heaven" (John iii. 13). And again: "I came down

from heaven" (John vi. 38). In the Nicene Creed we say: "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven." The dwelling-place from which Christ came down upon earth is above the firmament, above the stars; it is infinitely more beautiful and grand than the most princely mansion on earth, for it is the sublime palace of the King of heaven.

Moreover, His parentage is the most exalted possible. Who is His Father? Christ tells us Himself: "My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21). He repeats this expression again and again throughout the Sacred Scriptures. His Father is in heaven; He is the mighty ruler "who sitteth upon the Cherubim, alone God of all the kingdoms of the earth" (Is. xxxvii. 16). He is the mighty King in whose "hand are all the ends of the earth: and the heights of the mountains are His" (Ps. xciv. 4). He is the mighty Lord whose "name alone is exalted" (Ps. cxlviii. 13). He is the "Blessed and only Mighty, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Tim. vi. 15). And the Good Shepherd is His Son, "the image of the invisible God (Col. i. 15). Christ, then, is the most illustrious Shepherd by reason of His origin.

He is also exalted above all others by reason of His character. Lofty sentiments and character do more to enoble a man than illustrious descent. Look into the Heart of the Good Shepherd,—what sentiments do you find there? The noblest, the most sublime, that can be imagined, sentiments of infinite kindness and benevolence. Listen to His words: "Come to Me all that labor and are burdened, and I

will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28). "The Son of man cometh not to destroy souls, but to save" (Luke ix. 56). Moreover, the noble sentiments of His Heart were exemplified by the most noble deeds. "He went about doing good" (Acts x. 38).

2. Christ is also the most generous of shepherds. Consider all that He sacrificed for our sake: His riches. "Being rich, for your sakes He became poor" (2 Cor. viii. 9). "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. viii. 20). His whole life was one of poverty and privation.

He sacrificed His honor. It is said of Him: "He was reputed with the wicked" (Is. liii. 12). "There is no beauty in Him nor comeliness; we have thought Him as it were a leper" (Is. liii. 2, 4). He descended into the deepest abyss of humiliation and ignominy, and traversed an immeasurable ocean of shame and contempt. "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13).

He gave up His blood and His life. We read that, "Bowing His head, He gave up the ghost" (John xix. 30). "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood" (Apoc. v. 9). On Calvary He gave the last drop of blood, streaming from five deep wounds, and offered the sacrifice of His life for us.

Thus Christ is the most generous of shepherds; He has already given much for us but He wishes to give us still more. He wishes to give us His peace. "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth I give unto you" (John xiv. 27). He wishes to give us His

protection. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John xiv. 27). Such are His gracious words to His apostles, and again He says: "Behold I am with you all days" (Matt. xxviii. 20). He wishes to give us His grace. "To him that thirsteth, I will give of the fountain of the water of life, freely" (Apoc. xxi. 6). "Of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace" (John i. 16). He wishes finally to give us His kingdom. Listen to His promise: "I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom; that you may eat and drink at My table, in My kingdom; and may sit upon thrones" (Luke xxii. 29, 30). "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34).

3. Christ is the most forgiving of shepherds. He bears with our frailties. Man is a poor creature, subject to many infirmities. "A just man falls seven times" (Prov. xxiv. 16). "Who can say: My heart is clean, I am pure from sin?" (Prov. xx. 9.) And the Apostle says: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8). Nevertheless the Good Shepherd is kind and indulgent. "The Lord waiteth that He may have mercy on you" (Is. xxx. 18). "He dealeth patiently for your sake" (2 Pet. iii. 9). He Himself declares: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, wherefore He hath anointed Me, to heal the contrite of heart" (Luke iv. 18). "They that are in health, need not a physician, but they that are ill" (Matt. ix. 12). How much He bears from us! Alas! how often we forget His

loving-kindness, we are willing to suffer so little for His sake. We fail first in one thing, then in another, and grieve His Sacred Heart now by impatience, now by profanity, now in deeds and in thoughts. Meanwhile He is all clemency, all forgiveness; He bears with us from day to day to give us time for repentance. He overlooks our ingratitude, He forgets our weaknesses, daily He stretches forth His hands to bless us and lavish countless benefits upon us.

If at last we return to Him He welcomes back the wanderers. On earth He sought the sinners that had strayed from Him. "The Son of man is come to seek that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). In His character of Good Shepherd He went about in Judea and Galilee with infinite compassion, seeking the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Never did He repel a contrite heart, never, no matter how deep the sinner was sunk in the slough of iniquity. How kindly He received the sinful woman of Magdala, how lenient He was with the adulteress, how merciful He was toward the repentant thief! Even now His arms are extended in mercy to embrace all that come to Him with a sincere heart; all that have erred are assured a welcome. "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world" (John i. 29). "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool" (Is. i. 18). This is effected in the Sacrament of Penance. Such, then, is the Good Shepherd under whose protection you are. This privilege is yours, for you are His sheep.

PART II.

1. You are Christ's sheep because He has purchased you by His death on the cross. On Calvary the Good Shepherd shed His blood for His sheep, and they were saved. "Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross" (Col. ii. 14). "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled" (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). On the cross the dying Shepherd embraced His whole erring flock with His bruised and blood-stained arms and clasped them to His breast; and each one of you was among the number of that flock. "By the obedience of One, many shall be made just" (Rom. v. 19). "There is one mediator of God and man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a redemption for all" (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6).

You are Christ's sheep because you were made such in Baptism. At your baptism you were brought into close connection with the Good Shepherd. You then promised constant fidelity and love to Him, and you took that vow in a solemn manner, in the presence of heaven and earth, of angels and men. On account of this promise Christ sprinkled upon your soul the blood of the Redemption, flowing from His sacred wounds; "You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified" (1 Cor. vi. 11). At the same moment the Lord opened to you the portals of His holy house and admitted you into the Church. "Behold," says St. Chrysostom, addressing the neophytes of his day, "behold those who

before were in captivity now enjoy the delights of freedom and are become citizens of the Church."

You are sheep of Christ because you are united with Him by an eternal promise. You have by a solemn and eternal covenant chosen the Good Shepherd as your King and Ruler. Through your admission into the Church, through your entrance into this covenant with Christ, you are brought into the closest relationship with Him. You have pledged yourselves never to grieve Him by mortal sin, but on the contrary, to exert yourselves to promote His glory and to fulfil His holy will all the days of your life. Christ on His part has inscribed your names amongst the faithful disciples, those that He loves best. This, then, is the relation in which you stand to Christ, your Shepherd.

2. What, then, are your duties toward Him? If you wish to be faithful sheep of the divine Shepherd, you must hear His voice. The Good Shepherd speaks to you interiorly by the voice of conscience. Conscience is the voice of God speaking to us; it is a voice that speaks clearly, making itself understood perfectly. Have you never heard it? Forsake, it says to you in the innermost depth of your heart, those evil companions, break off that sinful courtship, do not stay away from home until late in the night, behave respectfully to your parents. This is the voice of the Good Shepherd. He also speaks to you exteriorly by the mouth of His representatives, the priest and your superiors, and admonishes you. What they say to you is not hidden; they tell you plainly, if you will but listen to them.

It is not sufficient to hear the voice of the Shepherd; —we must also follow Him. "My sheep follow Me" (John x. 27). On what path does He lead you? Certainly not on the path of sin. "He is without sin" (Hebr. iv. 15). "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Pet. ii. 22). If you walk in the ways of sin, in the way of drunkenness, of impurity, of disobedience, of pride, then you are not following the Good Shepherd. Renounce sin and its ways; "Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent" (Ecclus. xxi. 2). "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof. Neither yield you your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin" (Rom. vi. 12, 13). The Good Shepherd goes before you in the way of virtue. "It was fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled" (Hebr. vii. 26). His whole life was radiant with the highest virtue, so that the world looked at Him with admiration. He practised meekness, chastity, humility, obedience, contempt of the world in the highest degree. Follow Him; be meek, chaste, humble, obedient, despise the world and its pomp. To you He says: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John xiii. 15). Christ left you "an example that you should follow His steps" (1 Pet. ii. 21).

Christ is your Shepherd, and you are Christ's sheep. Rejoice! for He is the noblest, the most generous, the most indulgent of shepherds. On Him you can depend with security; with Him you can find compassion for your weaknesses. "With the Lord there is mercy: and

with Him plenteous redemption" (Ps. cxxix. 7). You are the sheep of the Good Shepherd because He redeemed you with His blood, He purchased you at Baptism, He is united with you by an eternal covenant. You are bound to Him by a thousand bonds, the bonds of charity and grace. Do not tear yourselves from Him. Be His true sheep; hear His voice and follow His footsteps. Do this and you will be unspeakably happy for all eternity. To you, O Good Shepherd, I commend the young men I am addressing to-day; protect and defend them, and let none of them be lost.

6. Two Roads to Heaven.

As we look at the great crowds of people in a large city, we see them hustling and bustling along. Every one seems to be on some errand with a definite purpose in view. They come and go by various streets and thoroughfares. So it is with human life; there are many ways,—one seeks pleasure and amusement, another seeks wealth, another, honor. They go by various ways to reach their purpose; some indulge in drink, others in dishonesty, others in pleasure. Not all these roads lead to the one goal that we should reach, the eternal happiness of heaven. There are but two ways on which we can travel with safety. These two roads to eternal happiness we are going to consider to-day. They are

I. Innocence, and
II. Repentance.

PART I.

1. Innocence is one of the two roads that we can travel on with safety and certainty of reaching the great end of our life. First of all we must have a clear idea of what innocence is. In Baptism all the burden of sin which weighs upon the human heart is taken away, and man thus becomes cleansed from all guilt and stands before God in the state of innocence. "Be baptized for the remission of your sins" (Acts ii.

38). "In the laver of regeneration," says St. Gregory, "all sins disappear like sparks falling into the waters of the sea." As long as a man keeps free from mortal sin after Baptism, so long will his soul persevere in the state of grace, and he is on the road of innocence. This road leads directly to heaven.

Such a one is a child of God. That we should by Baptism be adopted and become children of God is a wonderful mystery. "God hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself: according to the purpose of His will" (Ephes. i. 5). This predestination was fulfilled on the day of our Baptism, for on that day "God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). To those that have been baptized the words of St. John may be applied: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1). Through Baptism we have received the fruits of the Holy Ghost, and enter upon a new life. This is why Baptism is called a regeneration. One who is innocent is consequently a child of God.

He is also an heir of eternal life. "If a son, then an heir" (Gal. iv. 7). An heir of what? We are told: "Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17), "Heirs, according to hope, of life everlasting" (Tit. iii. 7). And, therefore, according to the testimony of the Apostle, the child of God is an heir "unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that cannot fade" (1 Pet. i. 4).

If, then, we preserve our innocence, we are children of God and heirs of His eternal kingdom, provided we depart from this world in that state of innocence, i.e., undefiled by mortal sin. He who travels on the road of innocence is certain of reaching the end of his existence, heaven, and not only will he reach heaven, but his way will be a happy journey, for the road of innocence is a safe one.

2. Let us not suppose, however, that because a man is free from mortal sin he is also free from the danger of falling into sin. He will be assaulted by a great number of enemies, and it has often happened that one who has preserved his innocence for a long time has finally turned into the road of sin and crime. Yet the road of innocence may be said to be a safe one. He who follows it knows full well that when once his pilgrimage has come to an end he will have a clear title to be admitted into the portals of eternal rest. He has the promise of God, which cannot prove deceptive, to establish his claim, and if he has walked as a good son, he has a right to demand from his heavenly Father the inheritance promised him; he can confidently say: "Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me" (Luke xv. 12). Therefore the road of innocence is safe and bright. How much there is in that one word—innocence! How it consoles us in all our trials and tribulations, how it encourages us in our conflicts! It makes our sleep sweet and our awakening joyful. "A secure mind," says the Wise Man, "is like a continual feast" (Prov. xv. 15). It is the "peace of God," of which the Apostle speaks

(Phil. iv. 7). What the springtide is to nature, with its countless blossoms and fair flowers, with its balmy air and soft sunshine, that innocence is to the soul. This is why Holy Scripture passes such encomiums on the innocent: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way" (Ps. cxviii. 1). "Blessed are the clean of heart" (Matt. v. 8). And St. Chrysostom says: "Rejoice, you who are innocent, and shout for joy."

Innocence is the first road that leads to heaven; it is a safe and bright path. Christian young men, I ask you, are you following this way? On the day of your Baptism, led by the hand of your guardian angel, you set out on this road. If you are still upon this same way, that is, if you have kept your innocence, you are indeed to be congratulated; you are happier than a prince of royal blood who is destined to possess the greatest kingdom on earth. The kingdom of heaven awaits you. "Having the glory of God, brilliant in the light of the Lamb, who is the lamp thereof" (Apoc. xxi. 11, 23). Go on courageously, fear nothing but sin; fly from it, even though the whole world might be gained by it. Watch and pray; fortify yourselves frequently with the bread of angels; and you will arrive safe at the portal of the eternal kingdom destined for you.

PART II.

1. Penance also is a road that leads to heaven. God pardons the sinner all his transgressions if he will but do penance. Listen to the words of Holy Writ: "Thou overlookest the sins of men for the sake of re-

pentance" (Wisd. xi. 24). "If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, he shall live" (Ezech. xviii. 21). Even the most heinous crimes will be remitted. "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool" (Is. i. 18). Our Lord instituted a special sacrament for the remission of sins, and gave to His priests, who are the ministers of this sacrament, power and authority to forgive and to loose the bonds of hell. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them" (John xx. 23). Thus God pardons the sinner and restores to him the right he had forfeited. Through mortal sin man loses the sonship of God and ceases to be an heir of heaven; he becomes a child of the devil and a prey of hell. According to the Council of Trent, the effect of penance is the reconciliation with God; and Sacred Scripture says: "They shall return to the Lord, and He shall be pacified towards them, and heal them" (Is. xix. 22). The soul that is reconciled to God and healed of the wounds which sin has inflicted becomes once more a child of God and an heir to the kingdom of heaven. The crown she had lost is again placed on her brow; she is reinstated in the rights she had recklessly cast from her. Thus she regains her title and claim to the kingdom of heaven; but only, be it remembered, through the infinite mercy of God.

2. Whosoever after he has strayed from the road of innocence wishes to gain heaven must return by the road of penance, a road followed only with much woe and suffering. He must pass through rivers of

tears. The penitent must weep over his transgressions. All contrite souls have done this at all times. Witness David, who writes: "My tears have been my bread day and night" (Ps. xli. 4). It was the same with the sinful woman of Magdala: "She began to wash His feet, with tears" (Luke vii. 38). And Peter, "going forth, wept bitterly" (Matt. xxvi. 75). Sin is an infinite evil, and justice demands that we bewail it with bitter tears. Penitential tears are a sort of baptism, and since the sacrament of regeneration can be received but once, we must wash our sins away in a new baptism, that of tears. The road of repentance is a painful one. Weeping is painful, but there are other painful experiences in store for the penitent. There is confession. The first thing a man must do to take the road of repentance is to make a sincere confession of his guilt to God's representative. After this he must make satisfaction for his sins. The first step taken, the second must follow. "Bring forth fruit worthy of penance" (Matt. iii. 8). The sinner must make satisfaction as far as he can to God and to man. To God by works of mortification, bearing his cross patiently. To man by restoring any ill-gotten goods that he may have, by repairing the damage done to others in their good name, etc. Both satisfactions require sacrifice, and that often not a small one.

Another thing that makes the road a bitter one is the remembrance of past sins. The memory of his misdeeds pursues a man all his life long, and is always more or less painful, even after he has obtained

pardon for them in confession. This it is that David refers to when he says: "There is no peace for my bones, because of my sins" (Ps. xxxvii. 4). Further, the traveler on the road of repentance meets with punishment for sin. Even though the sins be forgiven, they are still the source of affliction and punishment. "Thou didst not leave unpunished, O God, the sins of him whom Thou hast pardoned," says St. Augustine. Thus the road of penance leads through much tribulation to the bliss of heaven.

Innocence and penance—these are the two roads that lead to the gates of heaven; but with this distinction, that the road of innocence is an easy and beautiful one, whilst that of penance is beset with much suffering and difficulty. It may be, Christian young man, that you have long ago left the way of innocence and are lost in a maze of side roads; that the dance, improper company, the saloon, or some other evil, has led you from the right path; if so, then seek refuge in the way that leads to heaven by repentance. Your way will be longer and overgrown with many thorns, but yet it is the way that leads to salvation. If you have taken this path, be not disheartened—it leads safely to your Father's home. If you win heaven, you have won everything; keep steadfastly on the way, and it will guide you aright. "He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. xxiv. 13). "Be thou faithful until death: and I will give thee the crown of life" (Apoc. ii. 10), is the promise of God. What, on the contrary, will be your fate if you disregard both roads that lead to

heaven? Your journey cannot end anywhere except in hell, and every step forward in life brings you nearer to that end. Who can tell whether you shall have time until to-morrow to forsake the fatal road on which you are traveling? Wait not until to-morrow; this very night return to the right path; shed tears of repentance over your transgressions; implore God's mercy and forgiveness. Think well of the end of the journey, and lay it to heart.

7. The Virtue of Obedience.

"*The mind of the just studieth obedience.*"—Prov. xv. 28.

By the first sin committed upon earth the portals of the human heart were thrown open to the spirit of pride, and this evil entered into the heart of man and set up therein his throne, to reign there forever. Hence it comes that there is a generation "whose eyes are lofty, and their eyelids lifted up on high" (Prov. xxx. 13). This is the reason why man finds obedience so difficult; for the spirit of pride loves to act independently and as it deems fit, and refuses to be ruled by others. Most of you are subject to your parents or at least to masters and employers whose orders you are bound to obey, and therefore your position is one of subjection. Yet the spirit of pride is alive in the heart of many a young man, making obedience irksome and intolerable to him. This is why there are, as the Apostle says, "many disobedient" (Tit. i. 10), unruly souls who follow only their own desires, and with a careless laugh set at naught the regulations of those who have authority over them. Yet obedience is a virtue binding upon the consciences of those subject to others. Let us consider this virtue a little more closely. We shall see that

I. It is founded in faith, and
II. Ennobled by it

PART I.

1. Faith commands its practice. How earnest are the exhortations addressed to us in regard to the virtue of obedience! In the first place obedience to God is commanded. The pages of Holy Scripture are full of admonitions on this matter. "Keep My laws and My judgments, and do them" (Lev. xx. 22). "All the commandments, that I command thee, take great care to observe" (Deut. viii. 1). "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 20). "Why call you Me Lord, Lord; and do not the things which I say?" (Luke vi. 46.) And St. Paul says: "We have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith" (Rom. i. 5).

Likewise a great number of admonitions are given us as regards the obedience we owe to men who are set over us. Obedience is especially enjoined on children. The Wise Man says: "My son, keep the commandments of thy father" (Prov. vi. 20). The apostle St. Paul repeatedly urges this obligation upon the young: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" (Ephes. vi. 1). "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing to the Lord" (Col. iii. 20). Obedience is also enjoined upon servants as a duty in conscience: "Be subject of necessity, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake" (Rom. xiii. 5). "Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling,

in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ: not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but, as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephes. vi. 5-7). "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good, but also to the forward" (1 Pet. ii. 18).

2. Thus we see that obedience is a virtue commanded by our holy faith. God Himself, His only-begotten Son, the apostles—all enjoin it upon us as a duty. They also teach us in what obedience consists.

That we may have no excuse for neglecting to obey, faith sets before our eyes the illustrious examples of all good and holy men. It is said of Noe that "he did all things that God commanded him" (Gen. vi. 22). And of Abraham we read that he rose up in the night to fulfil the command of God (Gen. xxii. 2). St. Joseph is an especial model of the virtue of obedience; after hearing the bidding of the angel he "rising up from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him" (Matt. i. 24). And Mary, the ever-blessed Virgin, uttered those words of absolute submission: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke i. 38). Again, of the apostles Peter and Andrew we are told, when Our Lord said to them, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men," immediately leaving their nets, they followed Him (Matt. iv. 19, 20). Thus faith not only commands obedience, but also shows it to us in the example of our fellow men.

Not content with this, it gives us a still more il-

lustrious example, that of our divine Redeemer. Consider first what He says concerning Himself: "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me, that I may perfect His work" (John iv. 34). "I came, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (ibid. vi. 38). "He that sent Me is with Me: for I do always the things that please Him" (ibid. viii. 29). "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (ibid. xvii. 4). Consider in the second place His deeds. We have heard His words; His deeds show the same eminent obedience. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient" (Phil. ii. 8). Because His Father willed it, He became a little helpless child; because His Father willed it, He lived upon earth among mortal men for thirty-three years in poverty and suffering; because it was the will of His Father. He bore the ignominious death of the cross, sacrificing His blood, His life, and all things. Every step Our Lord took, every action of His life, all were done in virtue of obedience to His heavenly Father. He practised obedience in the highest degree. St. Bernard says, "Jesus showed Himself obedient when He came into the world, when He lived in the world, and when He departed from the world."

Hence we see that obedience is commanded by our faith—obedience to God, in the first place, and then, obedience to those in authority. We ought ever to be ready joyfully and lovingly to do the will of God; and God tells us that it is His will to obey His commandments, as also the commandments of our superiors in this life, so long as they order nothing

contrary to God's commandments. If it should happen that our superiors ask something of us that is sinful, then, far from being obliged to obey them, it is our duty to refuse obedience. Under such circumstances we must say, with the apostles, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29).

PART II.

1. The duty of obedience is ennobled by faith, for weighed in the balance of faith, the virtue of obedience is a noble one. Scarcely any other virtue is lauded so highly by the Fathers of the Church. Thus St. Gregory says: "Obedience is justly preferred before sacrifice, for in offering sacrifice the holocaust is something apart from ourselves, the flesh slaughtered is not our own; whereas in obedience our own will is the victim." And St. Thomas: "Nothing is more acceptable to God than that a man should renounce his own will; for if Abraham was so pleasing in the sight of God because he was ready to offer up his own son, how much more must they please God who by obedience offer themselves." Similar encomiums of obedience are found in the writings of other Fathers. The nobility of the virtue of obedience is also apparent from its fruits. Obedience is the source of many other virtues. "Obedience," St. Gregory declares, "is a virtue which causes every other virtue to germinate in the soul." As it is the source, so it is also the guardian of the other virtues. It produces and preserves humility and peace of heart. St. Francis of

Assisi calls obedience "the mother of humility and peace."

2. Obedience is the source of much merit. Precisely on account of the nobility of the virtue of obedience, it will meet with a great recompense. St. Bonaventure compares it to a ship by which the traveler reaches heaven, and to a ladder by which we ascend to the realms of bliss. It is a key that unlocks the gates of the heavenly city. Blessed are they who imitate Jesus in His obedience; they shall be heirs of the kingdom of heaven with Him. If it were given to us to see the ranks of the blessed in heaven, we should see no one there who has not practised the virtue of obedience by keeping the commandments of God; none who was disobedient and disrespectful towards his parents and superiors. The courts of heaven are filled with those who practised the virtue of obedience on earth.

Christian young men, the virtue of obedience which we have considered is not something of slight importance. The majority of you are sons whose parents are still alive, or you are in the employ of others; all of you are children of the Church and subject to wordly rulers. All of you owe obedience to a variety of persons. Only too often it happens that young men throw off the yoke of obedience; the spirit of pride, the hatred of restraint, which lurks in the soul, and the bad example they see round about them, lead astray many a one, inciting him to disobedience and revolt against authority. Ask yourselves if your conscience does not accuse you in this matter. Have

you not frequently disregarded the will of those over you and acted in opposition to their commands? Do not forget that obedience is a sacred duty binding in conscience. Hear what St. Teresa says: "If all the angels of heaven should come and say one thing, and my superiors were to say the contrary, I would not listen to what the angels said, but would do what my superiors commanded." Of course St. Teresa takes it for granted that the commands of her superiors were not sinful; otherwise it would be wrong to obey them. If you are disobedient, what can you expect Our Lord to say to you on the Judgment day. He became "obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). Therefore be obedient. Those of you whose parents are still alive, see that you obey your father and mother; those of you who are in the employ of others, remember that they have a right to expect obedience of you. Every act of obedience will be recorded in the Book of Life.

8. The Duty of Filial Affection.

"*Honor thy father and mother.*"—Mark x. 19.

St. Luke in his gospel writes concerning the child Jesus that when He was twelve years old "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth: and was subject to them" (ii. 51). Thus in a few words the Evangelist sums up eighteen years of the life of Jesus, mentioning nothing but the filial affection and obedience which Jesus showed towards His earthly parents. Would that I could go from house to house and exhort all children to imitate Jesus in this respect. Although I cannot do this, I can at least speak to you on this most important subject. Many of you have parents still living, most of you live with them under the same roof; can you say in all honesty that you show your parents the love and honor which you owe them? Alas, the complaints of so many parents about their children nowadays make us fear that there are also some amongst you who need to examine your consciences seriously as regards this duty. It is a duty

I. Which rests on a solid basis;
II. Which when fulfilled is attended with rich blessings.

PART I.

Filial love consists in a sincere and heartfelt affection on the part of sons and daughters towards their parents; it shows itself pre-eminently in the respect and obedience which they show towards them. It is a sacred duty founded upon most weighty considerations. Filial affection is a duty founded upon

1. The benefits children receive from their parents. Think of your early years. You owe your being to them; their love for you dates from the beginning of your life; it has accompanied you through life, and has been the cause of much anxiety for your welfare. What has not your mother done for you? Before you could so much as lisp her name, her unselfish goodness was all in all to you. What did not your father do for you? He worked for you in the sweat of his brow from early morning till late at night. Your parents treated you with the utmost kindness; they bore with you with the greatest patience. Is it not then incumbent on you to make some return to your parents for their loving care and forbearance by giving them the unfeigned love of your heart? Think of your later years. Your parents' affection for you did not decrease with advancing age. They still stood by you as a support and to warn you against danger, to keep you from evil ways. They did this from hour to hour, from day to day, even to the present time. How much anxiety they have had for you; with what solicitude they have brought you up, providing you with food and clothing, watching over you, denying themselves many things to have something for you, in-

structing you in the truths of our holy faith, leading you to God. If you have shown yourself ungrateful, if you have caused them grief and sorrow, they have loved you none the less—your ingratitude did not diminish their affection. Despite the tears you have caused them to shed, you were still dear to them, they prayed to God for you, they manifested nothing but kindness towards you. Such benefits, continued through a long period of years with unremitting tenderness, make filial affection on your part a solemn duty. Another reason is found in

2. The divine commandment. God commands children to honor their parents, to obey them, to support them, and to make them happy. Therein genuine love consists, that it show itself in deed and in action, and not in mere words. "Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John iii. 18). The divine commandment requires children to honor their parents. It is the law given to Moses on Mount Sinai: "Honor thy father and thy mother that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land" (Ex. xx. 12). Again Holy Writ bids children: "With thy whole heart honor thy father" (Ecclus. vii. 29). The same commandment is repeated again and again in the Scriptures.

Children are further commanded to obey their parents. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov. i. 8). The apostle St. Paul, likewise, enjoins children: "Children, obey your parents, for this is just" (Ephes. vi. 1). "Children, obey your parents in all things; for

this is well-pleasing to the Lord" (Col. iii. 20). Obedience to their parents is one of the primary duties of children.

Children are also commanded to help their parents. "Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life. And if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength, for the relieving of the father shall not be forgotten" (Ecclus. iii. 14, 15). Here we are taught the duty of helping and supporting our parents in their old age, and of bearing with their infirmities. How many sons there are that need to take this commandment to heart! How often we find children that are ashamed of their parents, that look down upon them because of the infirmities of advanced years! And how it pains us to meet with children that neglect their parents, that have no kind word for them, and leave them destitute of the means of life!

God commands children to make their parents happy. "Let thy father and thy mother be joyful, and let her rejoice that bore thee" (Prov. xxiii. 25). This is done especially by kindness towards them and by leading a good life; for "A wise son maketh a father joyful" (Prov. xv. 20). Thus it is clear that filial affection is a sacred duty for children. Nor must we understand this only of small children; the debt of gratitude we owe our parents is never paid. It extends over the whole lifetime of your parents; nay, it reaches beyond the grave. Do not imagine that you no longer owe your parents the honor and rev-

erence of your earlier days. On the contrary, it is now that your parents have grown old that they have an especial right to look to their grown-up sons for comfort and aid. It is now that you ought to listen to the inspired words of Scripture: "Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life" (Ecclus. iii. 14).

PART II.

The blessing of God rests, it is true, upon all that fear God, for "the habitations of the just shall be blessed" (Prov. iii. 33); but the benediction of God is more especially held out to children who faithfully keep the fourth commandment, and cherish a sincere affection for their parents. We have the assurance of this in the Word of God. In the first place, God promises blessings in general. "He that honoreth his mother is as one that layeth up a treasure" (Ecclus. iii. 5). Here we are told that good children obtain treasures, i. e., graces and blessings for time and eternity, by honoring their parents. Besides these general benedictions, God makes specific promises to dutiful children. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is just. Honor thy father and thy mother; which is the first commandment with a promise: that it may be well with thee and thou mayst be long-lived upon earth" (Ephes. vi. 1-3). In these words two things are especially promised—earthly prosperity and a long life. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: that grace may be added to thy head and a chain of gold to thy neck" (Prov. i. 8, 9). This

passage assures children who honor their parents of the esteem of men and worldly dignity. "My son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life. And if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength, for the relieving of the father shall not be forgotten. . . In the day of affliction thou shalt be remembered: and thy sins shall melt away as the ice in the fair warm weather" (Ecclus. iii. 14-17). Here we have promised succor in the time of affliction, and grace and remission of sin, as the reward of filial piety. "He that honoreth father and mother shall have joy in his own children, and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard" (ibid. iii. 6). Good children are assured happiness in their own families in later life, and the favorable acceptance of their prayers.

These are indeed magnificent promises on the part of God, who is faithful to fulfil what He promises. These are not the words of a man who makes a promise to-day and forgets it to-morrow, but they are the promises of God, of whom it is said, "He is not as a man, that He should lie, nor as the son of man, that He should be changed" (Num. xxiii. 19). History shows us that good children enjoy the special blessing of God:

1. In Holy Scripture. Isaac was an affectionate son and good to his parents, and accordingly God blessed him. "Isaac sowed in that land, and he found that same year a hundred-fold; and the Lord blessed him. And the man was enriched, and he went on prospering and increasing, till he became exceeding

great, and he had possessions of sheep and of herds, and a very great family" (Gen. xxvi. 12-14). Joseph was noted for his love towards his father, and the Lord raised him to become ruler over all Egypt; he was given the insignia of the highest dignity, and immense riches. Tobias, likewise, loved his father, and was rewarded in an especial manner by God. An angel was sent to be his companion on his journey, to guide him from danger and counsel him in the selection of a wife. He lived ninety-nine years in the fear of the Lord, and saw his children to the fifth generation, and all his kindred continued in good life and were acceptable to God and men (Tob. xiv. 15-17).

2. In the annals of daily life. Hundreds and hundreds of instances might be adduced from daily observation of children that were especially blessed on account of their filial love for their parents. In every city and in every village such examples are found. Let us look around us and ask, Why is there such happiness in this or that family? Is it not because the children are mindful of their parents and obey them? Why is there such discontent and continual quarrelling in another, if not on account of the neglect of this duty on the part of grown-up children? No doubt you yourselves have experienced the same truth, and have learned that reverence and love for your parents do not go unrewarded.

I have spoken to you of the duty of filial affection. Of what benefit will this instruction be to you? No doubt there are amongst you a great many who per-

form this duty conscientiously, and who are a comfort to your parents. The divine blessing promised to you will not be wanting in your life. God grant that you continue in this exemplary manner of life until the mortal remains of your parents are carried to the quiet churchyard, and that even after that you retain a loving remembrance of them and let your prayers ascend to heaven for them daily. But it is to be feared that there are also some of you who have been negligent in this matter, who have again and again caused their parents bitter tears and many a restless hour of worriment. These I ask, Will this instruction produce the fruit of changing your conduct towards your parents in the future? I should indeed not cease to thank God if it did. Let me recall to your mind but one thing more. The hour is approaching when your father and mother will depart from you; the familiar countenance of your parents will become pale as ashes, it will be covered with the sweat of death, the last agony will begin. A little time later you will be informed that your father, your mother, is no more. They will be carried to the cemetery to be deposited in the grave, and then you will begin to realize what good, kind parents you have lost. How will your present conduct towards them appear to you then? Will not your grief be mingled with the most bitter self-reproach? This remorse will accompany you through life; the memory of your parents will always be accompanied with the memory of your ingratitude towards them, with the memory that you have been a cross and a scourge to them in their old age. Be

persuaded now, whilst it is yet time, and make up for your neglect by true, filial affection for the remainder of their days. "Parent and child—words expressive of tender love, of abiding affection, a bond of nature united by the law of God," says St. Jerome. And he adds: "Our Lord Jesus Christ loved His Mother and his foster-father. He remembered that He had been borne in the chaste womb of His Mother, that He had been carried in the arms of Joseph. This induced Him, when hanging on the cross, to commend His Mother to the care of the disciple whom He loved. Oh, children, love your parents!"

9. How a Young Man Should Walk.

"We pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us, how you ought to walk, so also you would walk."—1 Thess. iv. 1.

St. Paul found it necessary to remind the faithful of the Church in Thessalonica that it was incumbent on them to order their lives according to the teachings and precepts he had given them. He addressed them in these words: "We pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us, how you ought to walk, so also you would walk." This apostolic admonition applies to us also. You ought to walk as your parents, as the representatives of Christ, the priests, have taught you from childhood to walk. What then is it that is required of you? You have often heard it, but it cannot be repeated too frequently; for this reason you will allow me to-day to recall some old and familiar truths, which, however, have not been always followed; so that you may resolve so to walk in the future as to reach safely your true country and home. Let us therefore to-day say a few words on the manner in which a young man should direct his steps. He must

I. Walk with caution;

II. With a pure intention.

PART I.

1. The young man's life must be one of continual caution; many dangers beset his path. As you are going through this life you are walking in the enemy's country, and at every step dangers to salvation are found. The enemy is ever wakeful to lay snares for you, and nowhere can you be certain that you will not fall into his traps. These dangers are to be found, in the first place, in the flesh which all carry about with them, and which "lusteth against the spirit" (Gal. v. 17), "captivating us to the law of sin, which is in our members" (Rom. vii. 23). Then there are the dangers that you meet with from the devil, who silently pursues you everywhere, seeking whom he may devour. The world is another source of constant danger to your salvation, the world which dogs your steps, which ceases not to entice you to evil; ungodly "men speaking perverse things" (Acts xx. 30) are also a peril which menaces you, men "who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. vii. 15); men speaking words of vanity, promising you liberty, whereas they are themselves the slaves of corruption.

Not only are dangers found everywhere, but also at all times. Danger meets you in the morning and in the evening, at midday and at midnight; there is no hour of the day, no hour in fact of our whole life when we are secure against the danger of sin. As long as we are pilgrims here below, we are in the enemy's country, and his weapons threaten our welfare. "The life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job

vii. 1). "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from their youth" (Gen. viii. 21). Dangers are in wait for you everywhere, and at all times snares surround you. Hence it behooves that you walk cautiously. He who would travel through a forest infested by robbers, or who would walk along a narrow path on either side of which a precipice yawns, must needs walk cautiously and circumspectly. Your way on earth leads through such a forest and along such a path; you must for this reason exercise the utmost diligence that you become not a prey to the enemy. Besides these dangers you must bear in mind that

2. Your strength is small. Man is very weak; the first sin reduced him from a giant to an infant. Once possessed of power to do every great and noble deed, he became weak and apt to fall to ever lower depths. Hence the Psalmist says: "Man is like to vanity" (Ps. cxliv. 4). And in the Book of Job the human race is spoken of as "they that dwell in houses of clay, who have an earthly foundation" (iv. 19). No wonder, then, the Holy Scripture speaks so frequently of the frailty of man. "There is no just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not" (Eccles. vii. 21). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us . . . If we say that we have not sinned: we make God a liar and His word is not in us" (1 John i. 8, 10). Man is very weak, but his frailty is greater at certain times than at others.

There are moments in a man's life when he is more liable to fall than at others. There are times when he

is so weak that he falls suddenly and almost without resistance. These are the times of strong temptations; they are the occasions when the enemy makes special efforts to take possession of our hearts. These times are of no unfrequent occurrence, and under their stress even persons of good lives have fallen into sin. These seasons of trial will also come to you, Christian young men; they will come in evil company, in the saloon, with your acquaintances. It is true, nevertheless, these temptations will not take away your free will, you will not sin of necessity; every temptation can be overcome with the aid of divine grace; but if you unprudently and wilfully expose yourselves to occasions of sin, there is danger that God will hide Himself from you, and all your good resolutions will melt away as wax before the fire. Thus it happens that young men fall into grievous sins, fall frequently, and they that were a pleasing spectacle in the sight of God become in a short time objects of horror.

Dangers are found on all sides and your strength is small. On this account I admonish you to be on your guard, to walk cautiously, lest you fall into temptation. The Holy Spirit of God urges us to be watchful. "Keep thyself, therefore, and thy soul carefully" (Deut. iv. 9). "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41). "Wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). It is necessary that you walk through this life prudently—"Go not in the way of ruin, and thou shalt not stumble against the stones; trust not thyself to a rugged way, lest

thou set a stumbling-block to thy soul" (Ecclus. xxxii. 25). Walk cautiously, especially when you know that extraordinary dangers await you, as, for instance, when necessity requires you to meet persons that are dangerous, when companions would lead you astray, when forming new acquaintances.

PART II.

1. Walk with your eyes fixed on God. This you do if your thoughts turn willingly to Him. "In all thy ways think on Him" (Prov. iii. 6). Lift up your eyes and your heart! Do this in the morning when you awake; lift them up frequently during the day; especially in times of temptation. If you walk in this manner, with your eyes fixed on God, peace will enter into your heart, the love of God will increase therein, and in your conflicts with the flesh, the world, and the powers of hell, you will prove yourself invincible.

We ought to offer our entire selves to God. He created us for Himself; we are wholly His, and every action of our lives ought to be for Him. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart" (Matt. xxii. 37). "Whatsoever you do: do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). "Brethren," says St. Gregory of Nazianzen, "you come from God, you belong to God, you exist for God, you were created that you might love Him and be eternally loved and rewarded by Him. Therefore go on your way towards God, speed onward towards eternal life. In this consists all the wisdom of man, this is his vocation, this his

high calling." You ought gladly to make an oblation of yourselves to God. You ought to offer Him your thoughts, words and deeds, the sweat of your countenance, the troubles that afflict you; you ought to offer Him your whole heart, with all its desires and affections. If you thus offer yourselves a holocaust to God daily, you will walk with your eyes fixed on Him, and you will one day receive from Him an eternal unperished recompense.

2. All your steps must be directed towards God. You will do this if you lead a virtuous life. God has made it a strict duty for us to walk in the way of virtue. "Be holy," He commands us, "because I am holy" (Lev. xi. 44). And Our Lord tells us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. v. 48). The path of virtue is the way of God, that is to say, by a virtuous life we please God and obtain His approval here upon earth and eternal life hereafter. Every act of virtue is a step that brings us closer to God, just as every sin takes us further from Him. Direct your steps towards God, not for a short time, but each and every day as long as life lasts. Every day presents us with occasions to practise virtue, to accomplish some good action. Patience at your work, kindness towards those round about you, resignation in the time of affliction, peacefulness, humility, piety, truthfulness, sobriety—all these virtues can be practised daily. "Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things"

(Phil. iv. 8). "But be zealous for that which is good" (Gal. iv. 18).

You will direct your steps towards God especially if you fulfil conscientiously the duties of your state in life. Every state or calling has its own peculiar duties and obligations, and in the faithful fulfilment of these is to be sought in an especial way your sanctification. Of all the virtues belonging to your state in life I will select two which I consider of the utmost importance: chastity and obedience. Practise these two virtues especially, and you will make progress in your way towards God. In the first place I would have you practise the virtue of chastity. Hear what the Apostle says: "Refrain yourself from carnal desires which war against the soul" (1 Pet. ii. 11). Be chaste in thought, word, and deed. To do this you must avoid the ways that lead to impurity—the dance, the saloon, evil companions, and dangerous acquaintances, both men and women. Nothing is more fatal to purity, nothing tarnishes this virtue more infallibly than such associations. He who entangles himself in a net of this nature will soon make shipwreck of chastity. Such intimacies are a "fire that devoureth even to destruction" (Job. xxxi. 12). "Wine and women make wise men fall" (Ecclus. xix. 2). In the second place I would have you practise the virtue of obedience. Be obedient without murmuring or contradiction; obey in all things lawful and right, and let your obedience be prompt and unhesitating. Be obedient to your father and mother especially. Do not obey them in your childhood only, but also in later

years; not merely whilst you need their support, but especially when you are grown up and can be of service to them. Repay them to some extent for the cares they underwent for your sake. Obey also your other superiors, for all power and authority is of God, and all your superiors hold the place of God in your regard. Obey your spiritual superiors when they issue orders for your salvation; obey also the civil rulers, for their laws bind us in conscience so long as they are not unjust.

You have now heard how you are to walk: with continual caution, because the dangers that beset your way are manifold and your strength is not great. With a pure intention, that is to say, with your eyes raised to God and your footsteps directed to heaven. Have you walked in this manner hitherto? Alas, what a painful sight it is, how sad for the angels of heaven to behold, when we see young men, many, too many indeed, walking with their eyes upon earth, walking towards the abyss of hell! Instead of pressing on towards God, they are hurrying to eternal damnation. "He that soweth iniquity shall reap evils, and with the rod of God's anger he shall be consumed" (Prov. xxii. 8). God says by the mouth of His prophet, "I will pronounce My judgment against them who have forsaken Me, and have sacrificed to strange gods" (Jer. i. 16). Walk as you have to-day been told to walk, with constant caution and purity of intention. Every step that you take which brings you nearer to God will be counted by your angel and inscribed in the Book of Life. You can take many a step in the

right direction every day, and how great will be your joy on the last day, when you have finished your course, if all your steps were in that direction. On that day the gates of the heavenly kingdom will be thrown open to you and you will be received as a conqueror returning from the victorious battle-field. Then you will hear the words of the king: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv. 23).

10. The Necessity of Order.

"*Let all things be done decently and according to order.*"—1 Cor. xiv. 40.

In the writings of St. Gregory Nazianzen the following passage occurs: "As long as order prevails and reigns, the world is fair and bright, its beauty is untarnished and unchanged. Disorder and confusion, on the contrary, cause thunder in the air, disturbances on the earth, shipwrecks at sea, wars and contentions in cities and families, maladies in the body, sins in the soul." The truth of these statements is evident to every one. Where order reigns, there is God's blessing; where disorder prevails, there His curse seems to rest. The love of order must be acquired betimes, for unless a man learns it when he is young he will not acquire or appreciate it when he has become old. To-day I wish to speak to you on the love of order. Perhaps some of you might be inclined to think such an instruction superfluous, that you do not need it, or that it is of little importance; but I hope in this instruction to convince you that the love of order is of the greatest benefit to you; and that it leads to success, not only in the business world, but also in the matter of your eternal salvation. We will consider

I. The reasons for loving order;

II. The particulars in which to have order.

PART I.

1. It is the will of God that we love to have order, for He Himself loves it. Of this fact the whole creation, the work of His hands, convinces us. How perfect is the order of the heavens above us! Millions of stars shine and twinkle overhead, and each individual orb has its proper place, each one moves in the course traced out for it by the Almighty. None gets in the way of the others. All is managed and arranged in the most perfect order. "The Lord giveth the sun for the light of the day, the order of the moon and the stars, for the light of the night" (Jer. xxxi. 35). How perfect is the order of the earth! The distribution of the elements, the recurrence of the seasons—all things are so arranged as to be beneficial to man, whom God made the lord of creation. Every thing has its place. "The mountains ascend and the plains descend into the place which Thou hast founded for them" (Ps. ciii. 8). "God looketh on all things that are under heaven, who made a weight for the winds, and weighed the waters by measure, when He gave a law for the rain, and a way for the sounding storms" (Job. xxviii. 24-26).

Not only does God love order Himself, but He also enjoins it upon us. We find the will of God in this regard expressed both in the Old and the New Testament. In the Old Law we read: "All things have their season: A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted. A time to destroy and a time to build. A time to weep, and a time to laugh. A time to keep, and a time to cast away. A time to keep

silence, and a time to speak" (Eccles. iii. 1-7). And in the New Testament we find the admonition of the Apostle: "Let all things be done decently and according to order" (1 Cor. xiv. 40). It is, then, God's will that we observe order in all things, and

2. God bestows a special blessing on those who keep order. This blessing is shown in the things that belong to this life. Order is of great value in getting on in the world, for nothing facilitates work so much as order. The man who keeps his business affairs in order will never find them too heavy a burden for his shoulders; he will never have to exert himself beyond his strength; and yet he will accomplish more than others of greater talent. In the absence of method work accumulates and confusion ensues. Not only does method make work comparatively easy, but it is also the greatest means of success in business. Thus order leads to temporal prosperity. Where there is order nothing is wasted, no time is lost, work proceeds briskly, and the confidence of others is secured; all these things make for success. Where disorder reigns everything goes amiss, and the best undertaking must fail. God's blessing is on those who keep order in temporal matters. This is no less true of those who keep order in things pertaining to their souls.

If in the things of time and sense the law of order must be observed lest confusion and ruin result, how much more true is it of the things belonging to our immortal souls! Regularity and order in a man's life are the means of rendering him secure against many dangers. They save him from the dangers attending

on idleness, for a man who has order in his occupations is never idle. A man who keeps order knows how to distribute his time, and thus escapes the dangers of reprehensible conversations, bad companions, frequenting dangerous places, etc. Order in spiritual matters conduces to virtue. What advance in the spiritual life can a man expect to make if he has no order and leaves all to impulse and caprice? His prayers are said occasionally perhaps, and then they are omitted for long periods; he may receive the sacraments frequently for a time, and then neglect them for months together. On the other hand, he who loves order and lives according to it will persevere in his pious practices; he will say his prayers daily, he will receive the sacraments at stated times, all things will have their time and their place, and the danger of neglecting them is reduced to a minimum because he believes in order. Order is his guide, and he advances steadily day by day towards heaven. If we wish to make progress on our journey to heaven we must draw up a rule of life, be it ever so simple, and live according to it. The good results that such a rule will produce in our souls will be immeasurably great. It is not he that runs and then stands still that reaches the goal, but rather he that proceeds steadfastly without interruption.

Order is a most important thing for our salvation; as it leads to success in the world of business, so it also leads to success in the matter of our eternal salvation.

PART II.

Order is of the greatest importance in all things, but there are in particular five things in which we must observe order; and they are

1. In the work of our calling. "As God hath called every one, so let him walk" (1 Cor. vii. 17). If you are in a subordinate position, perform your work with order and regularity. "In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening let not thy hand cease" (Eccles. xi. 6). Let all be done at the right time. Rise in the morning at the proper hour, and in the evening retire at the proper time; commence your work promptly and take recreation when it is in season. Do your work in the proper manner, not in the manner that is most convenient to you, but the manner that best serves the interests of your employer. If you are placed over others, make it your business to see that order prevails; observe order yourself. What is true of a kingdom, as is the ruler so are the subjects, is true even more strictly of a business house or a factory. Do not tolerate any improper conduct amongst those that are placed in your charge, for the idea that those placed over others in a business undertaking have no responsibility as regards the moral conduct of those under them is a false one. Do not allow any one to work above his strength.

2. In amusements. There is nothing wrong in harmless pleasure. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart be in that which is good" (Prov. xi. 9). But be orderly in the choice of your amusements. There are amusements that are of a

questionable and even dangerous character, such as certain dances, companionship with persons of no religion, intimacy with women whose character is not above suspicion, drinking-bouts. Such amusements must be avoided, because they constitute an occasion of sin. If they are indulged in, there is great danger of losing one's innocence and peace of mind. "If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thine enemies" (Ecclus. xviii. 31). Rather choose such amusements as will not rob you of virtue and stain your conscience. There is an abundance of lawful amusements. Again, observe order in the manner of taking your recreation. A game of cards, innocent in itself, is no longer so when protracted too long or made a means of gambling. It then interferes with your other work and ceases to be a recreation. Even amusements of the most innocent nature become harmful when indulged in to excess. Every excess is of evil.

3. As regards going out at night. Night may be said to be the principal enemy of the young man. Our Lord says: "He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John xii. 35). Many a one has fallen into the pit because "Darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John ii. 11). How many a one has lost his soul because of the deeds done in the dark! Be regular in your returning home at the proper time, and do not let the example, the persuasions, or the ridicule of evil companions induce you to indulge in doubtful or dangerous amusements during the hours of the night. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent not to them.

If they shall say: Come with us, cast in thy lot with us, let us all have one purse, restrain thy foot from their paths for their feet run to evil" (Prov. i. 10-17).

4. In devotions. Prayer is to the soul what the warm rain is to the plant. Without rain the plant would wither and die—in like manner the soul of a man dries up without prayer. St. Gregory of Nyssa calls prayer the "shield of chastity and the embankment to prevent the overflowing of pride." Without prayer it is quite impossible to lead a virtuous life and to fulfil one's duties properly. Never omit your daily prayers, in the morning and before going to bed; never omit saying grace before and after meals. The day that is begun and ended without prayer is not spent for God. The powers of hell in all probability will receive the greater portion of such a day, because it is certain to be beset with many dangers of sin which we cannot avoid without God's help. You cannot say that you have no time for prayer. Where there is a good will, there is always sufficient time for a short prayer in the morning and in the evening. Besides, the whole day can be made a prayer by performing your work with a good intention. Remember the admonition of the Apostle: "Whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. iii. 17).

5. Finally, in the frequentation of the sacraments. The holy sacraments are the most fruitful source of grace. They purify and sanctify the soul; nothing is so powerful in keeping us on the road to heaven as frequent confession and holy communion. "Con-

fession," says St. Bernard, "purifies the sinner and adds purity to the saint." Receive the sacraments regularly, if possible, every month or at least every two months. There may be young men of your acquaintance that seldom go to the sacraments, but what are their lives? They are generally enemies of the cross of Christ. Do not think that frequent confession and communion are not necessary for you. You are surrounded by a multiplicity of dangers daily, you are weak and certainly need the strength that comes from the sacraments to resist the temptation of the devil, the flesh, and the world. Make it a rule to receive the sacraments at fixed times, and carry out your resolution like a man. "Brethren, be not weary in well-doing" (2 Thess. iii. 13). Observe the law of order in these things and it will be well with you in time and in eternity.

11. Confession a Means of Salvation.

"*Be not ashamed to confess thy sins, for there is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace.*"—Ecclus. iv. 31, 25.

THERE are young men who are alarmed at the word confession; they would rather do any thing than go to confession; they would rather work hard all day until the sweat poured from every pore; they would rather walk any distance, rather bear hunger and thirst, they would rather be starved out in the cold than go to confession. Is the confessional really so terrible a place as one would be inclined to think from the conduct of these young men? No, there is nothing repelling about the confessional; on the contrary, it is an institution of God's mercy and love for sinners. It is there that the merits of Christ's Passion and death are applied to the soul to cleanse it from the stains of sin. It is there that the sinner receives the right once more to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven which he had forfeited. Confession is necessary for all, but it is especially necessary for the young man, and is the most powerful means of his salvation. By confession he receives

I. Great strength;
II. Interior peace.

PART I.

1. In confession we receive strength which preserves us from falling into sin; the eye of the soul is enlightened. In consequence of the sin committed by our first parents the spiritual vision of the soul has become dimmed and weakened. "We have groped for the wall like the blind, we have groped as if we had no eyes; we have stumbled at noonday, we are in dark places as dead men" (Is. lix. 10). Such are the words of the prophet. The Apostle also speaks of men "having their understanding darkened" (Ephes. iv. 17). A man, especially a young man, often is ignorant of what conduces to his spiritual welfare; in fact, he will sometimes take the path that leads to misery and death for the path of life and salvation. It is necessary for him to have his understanding enlightened, and this is done in confession. In the Sacrament of Penance the priest is the teacher of men, the priest who has studied the law of God, and who has a thorough knowledge of both the way that leads upward and that which leads downward. He can there point out for each individual the road to be taken and the one to be avoided. In virtue of his sacred office he says to the penitent: "This and that you must do, and this you must avoid, if you wish to obtain eternal salvation." Through the exhortation and instruction of the confessor the penitent acquires a clearer knowledge of what in particular he must do than he could obtain through more general instructions. He learns to recognize the particular enemies which he must guard against, and what dangers most threaten him,

His eyes are opened and his soul is enlightened. This is a great benefit to be derived from confession. If a man sees a calamity coming, he can take measures to provide for his safety. One who is walking in a dangerous place can arrest his steps when he hears the voice of warning calling to him: "Go no further, for there is danger ahead." If a traveler climbing a a steep and rugged mountain is warned by his guide to advance no further lest he fall into the abyss, he can be on his guard and avoid the dangerous spot. So it is with the penitent in confession. He has his eyes opened to his dangers, but this is not all; his will is also strengthened to resist the enemy.

Faith teaches us that it is only with the help of divine grace that we can resist the attacks of the flesh, the world, and the powers of hell. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16). The grace of God gives security, it is an impregnable wall of defense. It is precisely the Sacrament of Penance that imparts to us strength and obtains for us the grace of God. The penitent is required to make good, sincere resolutions to resist the enemy of his salvation manfully and courageously; and God bestows His particular blessing on these resolutions, and through the sacrament confers the necessary grace to keep them. There is another most important point to be considered in connection with the subject of confession. The penitent who has made a good confession approaches the sacred table of holy communion, and there receives fresh graces; graces that enable "him to walk upon the asp

and the basilisk, to trample under foot the lion and the dragon" (Ps. xc. 13), that is to say, to withstand all manner of temptation and gain the victory over the most formidable enemies.

You see then what marvelous strength is given to you in the Sacrament of Penance. It keeps you from falling by giving you understanding to see the law of God more clearly and strength to observe it. Besides this, it also

2. Raises you up if you have fallen. Considering the manifold dangers that beset us in the world and the extreme weakness of human nature, it is no wonder that we should at times fall into sin. "In many things we all offend" (James iii. 2). It is not an uncommon thing for man to fall into sin. Our divine Lord has, however, in His infinite compassion for us, provided a means whereby we can again be raised up when we have fallen. This means is the Sacrament of Penance, by which sins are forgiven. Our Lord commissioned the Apostles: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them" (John xx. 23). "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity" (1 John i. 9). It is the teaching of our holy faith that in confession all sins, even the most grievous, are forgiven, provided the confession has been made with sincerity and contrition. "When the penitent casts himself at the feet of the priest he is lifted up again; when he condemns himself he is absolved" (Tert. De Poenit.). By the Sacrament of Penance all the blessings lost through sin are restored.

Mortal sin deprives man of all the gifts of the supernatural order; it robs him of sanctifying grace, of his adoption into the family of God, or at least of the rights that flow therefrom, of the inheritance of the elect; it robs him even of the merits of his past good works. Such a one has become "poor and naked." In confession he regains all that he lost by sin. When the priest pronounces over him the words of absolution, the heavenly treasures are opened to him, he regains sanctifying grace, he is again numbered among the good children of God, the inheritance which he had lost is restored to him, and the merits of his past life revive. All his actions performed under the proper conditions are worthy of eternal recompense.

Thus through confession the sinner is raised up from his fall, all his transgressions are forgiven, and the grace which was lost is restored to him. Behold the wonderful power of the Sacrament of Penance! It places those that had despised God again among His chosen children.

PART II.

1. Confession gives interior peace, because God therein pardons us. With sin the sense of guilt enters into the soul, and peace departs. Holy Scripture says: "There is no peace for the wicked" (Is. xlviii. 22). On the other hand, peace is to be found in the heart of him who is in the friendship of God. When Adam sinned peace departed from him, and he said: "I heard Thy voice in paradise and I was afraid" (Gen. iii. 10). Cain sinned and he became

a wanderer on the face of the earth. "He went out from the face of the Lord and dwelt a fugitive on the earth" (Gen. iv. 16). David sinned and the same happened to him: "My heart is troubled within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me. Fear and trembling are come upon me" (Ps. liv. 5. 6). Peter sinned and "he went forth and wept bitterly" (Matt. xxvi. 75). Has not each one of you experienced this? What apprehension filled your mind when you stretched forth your hand and took the forbidden fruit held out to you by the devil! What a disquiet and alarm took hold of your soul, especially on the day that you committed your first serious fault!

After confession a sense of pardon enters the soul. The penitent believes that God has forgiven him; he is assured of it. Hence he feels himself at peace. The son who has transgressed the command of his father gives a deep sigh of relief and seems to breathe more freely when his father whom he had offended pardons him and says: "All is forgiven." How the criminal rejoices if before the fatal rope is laid around his neck, a messenger arrives and proclaims his pardon! In like manner the heart of the sinner is relieved after confession. "According to the multitude of my sorrow in my heart thy comforts have given joy to my soul" (Ps. xciii. 19). "Jacob shall return and be at rest, there shall be none whom he may fear" (Jer. xxx. 10). Peace is found in confession, because

2. God rewards the penitent. Confession is an act of profound humility. Man, who is naturally proud, and unwilling to confess himself in the wrong,

is made to kneel down at the feet of the priest and frankly confess his sins, to narrate his misdeeds that he would fain consign to oblivion. On this account confession, which is an act of self-abasement, is rewarded by God with a peace "not as the world giveth," "a peace which surpasseth understanding" (Phil. iv. 7). Peace descends upon the penitent, not as drops of dew, but as the waters of a river. There is no other act of self-denial, no other act of Christian virtue, that is followed by such intense joy as confession. By its means the man who groaned under a load of sin is made to feel light and happy; his soul is inundated with light and gladness, as when the rays of the sun pierce through the clouds and shed brightness and radiance over the face of the earth. Such has been the experience of thousands upon thousands of men who have received the benefits that flow from a good confession.

I have now shown you that confession is a powerful means of salvation; it imparts great strength to the soul and gives enduring peace. Therefore go to confession, go frequently to confession, and avail yourselves of the means that God offers you for your salvation. Only by going to confession can you keep yourselves from falling; and if you have fallen into grievous sin, it is only by confession that you can rise again from the fall. Besides this, you will find comfort and peace in confession, a peace that is not of this world. Unhappily too many young men avail themselves of the benefits of confession too little; or when they do come to the tribunal of God's mercy,

they come with poor preparation and little contrition. How often they are wanting almost entirely in contrition and sincere purpose of amendment, and the confession lacks in completeness and in sincerity! No wonder, then, that so many young men drift away from the Church, when they do not use the principal benefit that God offers them through it. I beseech you by the value you put upon your immortal souls, go to confession, and go regularly. Make a resolution to go every month or every two months, and hold fast to this resolution. Keep to it even should the devil heap endless obstacles in your way. You will then discover that confession is a source of joy and happiness such as nothing else can give, and on the last day you will appreciate the wisdom wherewith you have acted.

12. The Trials of the Workman.

"*I will hedge up thy way with thorns.*"—Os. ii. 6.

THE words of the prophet, "I will hedge up thy way with thorns," apply in a greater or less degree to all men; for it was said to the father of the human race and to all his posterity: "Cursed is the earth in thy work: with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee" (Gen. iii. 17, 18). Hence it is that thorns spring up everywhere, in the mansions of the rich as well as in the hovels of the poor. Yet there are some states in life where they seem to grow more luxuriantly than in others. Most of you, if not all of you, are in the employ of others, and this is one of the states in life that has its abundance of thorns. I wish to speak to-day of the trials of the workman who is in the employ of strangers, and I shall consider

I. What his thorns are;

II. How they can be changed into roses.

PART I.

1. The thorns of the workman in the employ of others are numerous, because his position entails privations. Workmen are rarely wealthy; as a rule

a workman owns little more than his weekly wages, and these he needs for his support and the support of those dependent upon him. The young man who works for wages cannot allow himself all that his heart would crave for; he cannot do as the sons of the rich do. He cannot go farther than his wages reach, and they do not allow him to go on daily pleasure-trips, drink the choicest wines, dress extravagantly, and take part in all the amusements of the day. He must perhaps support an aged father or mother, he must try to save something for the future; all this requires a certain amount of restraint and privation on his part. Another reason why the position of the workman is one of privation is because it is a position of dependence. He cannot dispose of his time as he pleases; he must work at what the employer wishes him to do. Often he is under orders of a fellow workman whose disposition of character is not congenial. All these things may become trials to the workman; they are thorns in his path, which frequently wound his feet and make his calling disagreeable to him.

2. The workman's position is one of obedience. Social order requires that this be so; men are not equal in all things, nor is it possible that their social position should be equal. There must ever be rulers and ruled, masters and servants, employers and employed; without this distinction of classes the world would come to a standstill. It is, therefore, just that those in authority should command, and that those that are subject should obey. This is a divine insti-

tution ordained by God; where this rule is not observed there is confusion and disorder. Just think of the consequences that would result in the world if all the bonds of obedience were dissolved. The family, the household, the state, in fact every society of whatsoever description is based on the principle of authority and obedience; and this is equally true of a factory or workshop. Without obedience these organizations of society must come to an end.

The admonitions which the Holy Scripture addresses to servants are also true in substance of the workman. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh" (Ephes. vi. 5). "Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters" (Tit. ii. 9).

3. The workman's position, finally, is one of labor. He is hired for this purpose, to do the work of his employer, and hence cannot justly indulge in idleness. He receives his wages for work, and not for idling. Oftentimes he must rise early in the morning, bear the heats and the burden of the day, exert himself to the limit of his strength in order to satisfy the demands of his employer. His work is often extremely fatiguing, extending over long hours. Though labor may become a pleasure under certain circumstances, it is generally more correctly looked upon as a trial rather than a pleasure. It was by way of punishment for sin that God enjoined upon Adam the obligation of eating his bread in the sweat of his face. Added to this is often a spirit of discontent with one's lot that embitters still more the trial of work. It is this spirit

which comes from the devil, that we must guard against especially in our work, since it has the power of rendering even light and agreeable work an unbearable burden.

Work, then, is a trial, and there are many thorns in the path of the workingman, because the condition of the workingman is often one of privations, of dependence, and of labor; but my purpose in pointing this out has not been to make you despondent or faint-hearted. Despondency and discontent are the enemies of the workman. The reason I have pointed out the thorns in your path is that I have a means to suggest to you by which you can turn thorns into roses.

PART II.

1. The thorns of the workman may be turned into roses by his being contented with his calling. Content is one of the best means of happiness; it makes the poor man rich; it converts trials into pleasure, thorns into roses. "The life of the laborer that is content with what he hath shall be sweet, and in it thou shalt find a treasure" (Ecclus. xl. 18). St. Francis de Sales asserts that the happiness of life consists in being content with a sufficiency. Contentment with one's calling can be obtained by looking at the world as it is. It is an abode of trials, sufferings, a valley of tears. "The days of man," says Job, "are like the days of a hireling" (Job vii. 1). And the author of the Imitation of Christ tells us that mortal life is full of miseries, all signed around with crosses (Imit. b. 2, ch. 12). It is not only the state of the workingman

that has its trials,—every state in life has its own difficulties and thorns; there is none where the sky is perpetually serene and only roses bloom. In other paths besides the one you pursue thorns are found to wound the feet of the wayfarer; indeed, they are often of a size of which you have no conception. Many a thorn of which you know nothing is found in the path of the priest, the doctor, the lawyer, the father of a family. Even in the highest ranks of society tears flow in abundance, and "he that weareth purple and beareth the crown" (Ecclus. xl. 4) is often crushed to the ground by a heavy burden. Cast your eyes upon the world round about you, compare your work with the work of others more heavily burdened, compare your trials with theirs, and do not complain about your state in life, but be content. Let us also remember that men often conceal their troubles from the world, and that many a man hides a sore heart behind a smiling countenance.

Another source of content is found in looking up to God, whose will we perform. Our holy faith teaches us that there is a divine providence that disposes all things: "He ordereth all things sweetly" (Wisd. viii. 1). "The eyes of the Lord are upon the ways of men, and He considereth all their steps" (Job xxxiv. 21). Holy Scripture teaches us that God disposes all things, especially the ways of man; it must then be God's will that we be in the state of life that we find ourselves in. What a consolation for us! As we work, we are doing the will of God. Then again, contemplate the Son of God. He in

whom were all things created in heaven and on earth humbled Himself, "taking the form of a servant" (Phil. ii. 7). The first thirty years of His life were spent in the workshop of His foster-father, St. Joseph. Ought not this consideration make you contented with your lot?

2. Another means of turning the thorns of your calling into roses is found in this, that your work may be made meritorious for heaven. Such roses never fade. Nothing is easier than this, for God in His mercy counts to our merit a cup of cold water given in His name. How much more meritorious than a cup of cold water will be your daily labors and trials if offered up to Him! St. Paul exhorts us: "Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that you shall receive of the Lord the reward of inheritance" (Col. ii. 23, 24). If you work for God, not merely for men, all your labors and trials will become valuable for eternity, and will merit for you the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. i. 4). The wages you earn upon earth are indeed small, but the reward you may receive for them in heaven is incomprehensibly great. In this manner the thorns in your way may be changed into roses that never fade, and which will be woven into a crown to be placed on your brow for all eternity.

Sad indeed would be your lot if, after toiling and laboring a whole lifetime, you were to receive no other reward than the mere pittance of a salary that

is paid to you by your earthly masters. Sad indeed would be your lot if through your whole life you had struggled on in discontent and at the end of it you appeared before your heavenly Master empty-handed to hear the sentence: "The unprofitable servant cast ye out into exterior darkness" (Matt. xxv. 30). In order that you may avoid this doom, do not listen to agitators who are trying to arouse discontent in you and who have nothing to offer for the peace of mind of which they wish to rob you. Be contented with your state of life by looking upon the world in the right light, that it is a vale of tears in which no one can entirely escape sorrows and trials, by looking upon God, whose will you are fulfilling, by considering the example of the God-Man, by turning the labors and trials of life into sources of eternal merit. Do this, and the thorns inseparable from your state in life will become roses of eternal beauty.

13. The Faults of Workmen.

"Do ye all things without murmurings and hesitations, that you may be blameless."—Phil. ii. 14, 15.

Most of you here before me to-day belong to the class of the workingmen who earn their living by the work of their hands. There are, no doubt, many workmen who are honest, conscientious, and careful in the performance of their duties, and who are for this reason trusted and loved by their employers. On the other hand, we must also admit that there are many complaints made to-day about workmen, and that these complaints are only too often well founded. We will now consider in a general way some of the more common complaints made against workingmen, and see how the faults that occasion them may be remedied. We shall examine

I. The more common faults of workmen;
II. The remedies for them.

PART I.

1. There is among workingmen a widespread discontent with their state in life. Workingmen are too willing to listen to agitators whose main business it seems to be to spread discontent amongst them, with-

out having any reasonable means to offer for the betterment of their condition. Although the condition of the workingmen has improved continually, happiness has not increased with their improved condition; quite the contrary, the better off they are materially, the more discontented they seem to become. They look upon their work as slavery, and their wages as insufficient. At the least provocation they leave their work and strike; and what is worse, they often resort to such means without having any clear reason for doing so, being only tools in the hands of agitators who seek their own interest.

2. Workmen often take no interest in the welfare of their employers. They look upon their employers as enemies, instead of as friends; they believe that there must necessarily exist opposition between them instead of a friendly co-operation. Hence they perform their work merely to satisfy their employer sufficiently to retain their situation, and have no intelligent interest in the advancement of his business. That bond which in former times united employers and workmen so that they became almost like members of the same family, the employer looking after the best interests of his workmen, and the workmen looking upon the business of their employer as if it were their own, has for the most part ceased to exist. The place of loyalty to their employer has been taken by a spirit of opposition. The workman who has at heart the interest of his employer has become extremely rare.

3. There is a lack of honesty in the performance of

their duties on the part of workmen. Everywhere we find the tendency to do as little as possible for the wages received. The work is often done in a slip-shod, slovenly manner which destroys the reputation and credit of the employer. The moment supervision is relaxed, workmen indulge in idleness and seem to think nothing of robbing their employers of the wages which they thus draw for work not performed. This is an injustice, just as though they had stolen the amount of money they receive for the hours idled away. Few workmen of to-day labor cheerfully from conscientious motives; only too many work merely out of compulsion.

4. Workmen are often extravagant. When they earn high wages their money disappears like the leaves at the first blast of winter. They cannot, or better, will not, put anything by; all that they earn is spent in dress, in drink, in gambling, in pleasure. Year after year goes by and nothing is saved. When they fall sick they become a burden to others. Young men who have earned large salaries for years have nothing when the time comes to marry and found a family of their own. On the contrary, it often happens that they enter marriage with debts to be paid. The love of pleasure is growing continually, so that no increase in wages can keep pace with it, and the consequence is that with the shortening of hours of work and the increase in pay the condition of the workingman has not improved proportionately.

5. Workingmen are fast becoming irreligious. Nowadays, it is said, there is little Christianity among

the working classes. To be convinced of this we need only listen to their conversations. Any one who has any regard for morality and decorum must blush at the things that are the daily topics of their conversation. The same is evident from the conduct of so many young men belonging to the working classes. They spend the greater part of the night away from home; respect and obedience to parents is unknown to them; they frequent bad company; the church and prayer no longer figure in their lives; the sacraments, if at all received, are received but once a year to satisfy the strict letter of the law, as long as they have not entirely cast off Christianity. How seldom they come to hear a sermon or an instruction on Christian doctrine! It is true there are many exemplary Christian young men in every parish, but our examination is concerning young men who belong to the working class in general; and certainly if we consider them as a class, the faults that we have pointed out are only too well founded.

Besides these general complaints about workingmen, there are many particular ones, referring to individual workmen. Every one has his faults and weaknesses, even "the just man falleth seven times" (Prov. xxiv. 16). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John i. 8, 9). If this is the case with all men, then workmen are not exempt from faults and sins. What our particular fault is we must find out for ourselves; some have a bad

tongue, others are given to drink, others to dishonesty, others to sudden fits of anger making them disagreeable to their employers and their fellow workmen.

PART II.

1. Most of the complaints that we hear about workmen would be silenced if they would turn with more earnestness to their holy faith. It is faith that teaches us the nobility of work; by faith we learn that work is commanded us by God. God Himself instituted labor. "Six days thou shalt work" (Ex. xx. 9). "Hate not laborious work, nor husbandry ordained by the Most High" (Ecclus. vii. 16). "Endeavor to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1 Thess. iv. 11). That which God has commanded can assuredly be nothing ignoble or vile. Moreover, work has been sanctified by the example of the Redeemer Himself, who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Mark x. 40). For thirty years the Son of God helped Joseph in his work as carpenter. In the light of our holy faith the calling of a workingman is certainly a noble one. Furthermore, the calling of a workingman is an easy one. This seems strange at first sight, considering that he must exert himself through long hours and bear the burden and heats of the day; yet the statement is true. Look at the heavy responsibility that rests on fathers and mothers of families; consider the anxieties of employers, who often risk their whole fortune on some undertaking; look at the worriment of the farmer who is in constant fear lest a storm destroy in one hour the labor

of the whole year. What are the anxieties and responsibilities of the young workman compared to these? He works, and is generally sure of his wages; at the end of the day his head rests quietly upon his pillow, free from cares. If a misfortune befalls the enterprise in which he is engaged, the loss falls on other shoulders. His conscience, too, need trouble him little; he has not the responsibility that rests on the parent and the man in authority, who have to answer not only for themselves, but also for others. If he performs his daily work conscientiously and attends to his religious duties, he can calmly await the hour of the final reckoning, confiding in the great mercy of God.

If workmen were more imbued with the spirit of faith they would recognize their position as a noble and easy one, and would not give themselves over to discontent; they would perform their duties cheerfully and conscientiously, and thus most of the complaints so common against them would disappear. By the light of faith they would more clearly see the obligations their state in life lays upon them; they would be more loyal to their employers and take their interests more to heart; they would become more honest in their work. Their faith would teach them to work for God, and not for man. "Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but, as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephes. vi. 6, 7).

Thus workingmen may by the light of faith obtain

a better understanding of their duties in life; and the first step toward fulfilling them is to know them. Besides, the knowledge that it is God's command will prove the greatest inducement to be honest and conscientious in their work.

2. Conscientiousness is another powerful means of removing the faults commonly complained of in workingmen. This springs from faith; worldly motives are generally insufficient to make men truly conscientious. If a workman is conscientious there is seldom any cause for complaint; he will be diligent in his work, he will have the interest of his employer at heart, and will not listen to godless men who try to rob him of his peace of mind and make him discontented with his calling. Such a man commands the confidence of his employer, because he is trustworthy and true. A workman who has faith and is conscientious looks upon his work in the Christian spirit; he sees in it the fulfilment of God's will, and is not disturbed by little difficulties and trials that spring up from time to time; he is willing to make a sacrifice for God's sake.

If the spirit of faith and conscientiousness were to increase among workingmen, the complaints of which we speak would soon be silenced; for it is mainly because faith is dying out amongst them that all the countless troubles between laborers and employers arise. Both sides are possessed with a spirit of greed and selfishness; none is willing to consider fairly the just claims of the other, and hence each is continually endeavoring to take unfair advantage of the needs of

the other. It is only Christianity that can remedy the evils of the times. What we need is more believing and conscientious workmen and employers. Take in good part the admonitions I have addressed to you to-day; in what I have said I have had nothing but your own welfare at heart. Be upright and honest, so that your employers will have no reason to complain of you, and you will obtain that which is due to you more easily than by opposition and discontent. Every one must admire an honest, diligent workman and will be anxious to recognize his just claims by retaining him. Your calling is not without trials, but you would find just as many, and perhaps greater ones, in every other calling. And do you not know that there is One who counts the drops of sweat upon your brow, and who recompenses every sacrifice? "I will repay them according to their deeds and according to the works of their hands, saith the Lord" (Jer. xxv. 14). The workman who is animated with faith and who performs the duties of his calling conscientiously will one day hear the words of Our Lord: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv. 23).

14. How Young Men Spend the Days of their Youth.

EARTH is not the destination of man; his destination is heaven. Our sojourn here below lasts but a short time; then the hour comes when we must lay aside our mortal bodies, the garb of our terrestrial pilgrimage, and pass into eternity. "We have here no lasting city, but we seek one that is to come" (Hebr. xiii. 14). Fortunate indeed shall we be if we reach the grand, the wonderful goal for which we were created and redeemed. Yet this goal can be reached only by our leading virtuous lives in this world. "Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. vii. 21). Now, the will of the Father is that we walk in the way of virtue and godliness. Unfortunately, young men are not sufficiently persuaded of this. A great many think that virtue is for women and old men, but that they do not need to be concerned about it. We shall consider to-day:

I. Do young men lead virtuous lives?
II. Is this state of affairs right?

PART I.

If we look about us we undoubtedly see many a young man who walks in the fear of God, who is a credit to his religion, who is a joy and a consolation to his parents; but we see also a great many, and I

fear the majority, who have no love for Christian virtue. To this conclusion we come from considering

1. The lives so many young men lead. Only too many seem to have lost all taste for heavenly things; their thoughts do not dwell on the supernatural; they care little about making progress on the road that leads to heaven; "they do not mind the things that are above" (Col. iii. 2); neither do they "first seek the kingdom of God and His justice" (Matt. vi. 33). Look around you! Alas, how frequently the sense of heavenly things seems to be completely lost! The young men of to-day go out to business, they busy themselves about their daily work, and the day ends without one thought of God. If they say any prayers, how cold and half-hearted they are! Even when they hear Mass, it is to be feared that few prayers are said in a manner pleasing to God. Many of them neglect the sacraments, or if they receive them, it is but once a year in order to remain within the pale of the Church. Where among young men do we find the virtues of obedience, chastity, humility, self-denial? Well indeed did the Wise Man say, "There is no just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not" (Eccles. vii. 21).

Too often young men have their affections fixed upon earth. What are the things of earth that they strive for? They are filled with what St. John calls the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are the things of earth, the love of which enters into so many young men's hearts. Go from house to house, and ask

parents what kind of young man their son is. The answer is generally a sorrowful one. "Alas," they will say, "he has no idea of submission or obedience to his parents, no idea of reverence for his superiors, no idea of order." The worldliness of young men shows itself in their desire for the gratification of the senses, their love for drink, gambling, and amusement. The Apostle bids the Christians of his day, "Flee from youthful desires" (2 Tim. ii. 22). What a sad spectacle the world presents in this respect! Many a young man appears to have lost all sense of shame; he commits sins that he should blush for in the sight of the all-seeing eye of God, misdeeds that should make him ashamed when he thinks of the presence of his guardian angel.

Even a cursory glance at the mode of living of so many young men must convince us that their lives are not the lives of the virtuous. To what shall we attribute this state of affairs? It is largely to be sought in

2. The great dangers that beset young men. These are numerous, but we shall confine ourselves to the consideration of two: passion and bad example. Young men have a natural tendency to thoughtlessness and frivolity. Hence they seldom think before they speak or act; they take superficial views of religion, and treat spiritual things lightly; they pay no heed to the admonitions and the advice of parents and superiors; they run heedlessly into all manner of dangers; they never ponder seriously their duties or their sins and failings. Besides this, they are sur-

rounded by bad example. "The whole world," says St. John, "is seated in wickedness" (1 John v. 19). This accounts for the prevalence of bad example. How do the majority of young men spend their leisure time? We seldom see them approach the holy table or the confessional; they are more often seen in the saloon and the dancing-hall; they wander about the streets at night. What an amount of evil example is given by their conversations, their unseemly jests! Examples of this nature abound, and they are infectious.

Thus we see that young men have no small dangers to cope with, and unfortunately many succumb to them. The reason why so many fall is because they do not fight against these temptations with sufficient vigor and courage. The natural lightheartedness of youth and the influence of bad example must be resisted with determination. The armor of God must be put on, the exhortation of the Apostle must be taken to heart: "Resist ye, strong in the faith" (1 Pet. v. 9). This is the only way in which a young man can prevent himself from being carried along with the current and swallowed up in the abyss. Only too many are not determined to conquer in the strife. They draw the sword, but no sooner have they done so than they sheathe it again, especially if the temptation is an enticing one. There is another reason why so many lay down their arms when danger threatens them; it is because they do not pray with sufficient earnestness and fervor. Of his own strength no one can gain the victory,—it is a gift of God. "It is not

of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16). God is ever ready to assist man in the contest, but it is His will that man should implore His aid. Hence we are told: "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41). On this account St. Ambrose speaks of prayer as an excellent shield, by which the arrows of the enemy may be turned aside. It is, however, the universal complaint that young men show no devotion and take no delight in prayer. They require persuasion to go to church, seldom can they be induced to join the recitation of the Rosary. And when they do pray, their thoughts are often far from what their lips utter. This being the case, we cannot be surprised that they fall under the strong temptations to which they are subject.

Such is unfortunately the condition of a large number of young men, even when we take into account only those of our own faith who have enjoyed a Christian education. The picture becomes still more dismal when we take all young men into account, most of whom have never had the advantage of religious training. When we contemplate this picture we would cry out with the prophet: "Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes? and I will weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people" (Jer. ix. 1).

PART II.

1. A young man without virtue is extremely displeasing to God. He who makes a bad use of his

early years robs God of the most acceptable oblation. God always wished the first-fruits of every thing offered to Himself, and regarded such offering with special pleasure. "Abel offered of the firstlings of his flock, and the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offerings" (Gen. iv. 4, 5). The Jews are again and again admonished to offer the first-fruits to God. In the Law it is said: "Thou shalt not delay to pay the tithes and thy first-fruits. Thou shalt give the first-born of thy sons to Me" (Ex. xxii. 29). The first-fruits that we should offer to God are the years of our youth. This oblation is highly acceptable to God, because it is pure and undefiled. It is otherwise with the later years of our life. "He who spends his youth in dissipation, and only turns to God when he is growing old, offers to Him fruits of which the devil has already gathered the sweetest; he offers Him sheaves out of which Satan has appropriated to himself the best ears of wheat," says St. Thomas Aquinas.

He who spends his youth badly violates the most solemn oath made to God. This is his baptismal vow. By that vow a man pledges himself to spend his whole life in the service of God. The years of his youth are not excepted in this promise; on the contrary, they are the most precious portion of his life. God wishes especially these years spent for Him: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Eccles. xii. 1). "My son, receive my instruction, that years of life may be multiplied to thee" (Prov. iv. 10). If, therefore, a young man does not practise virtue in his youth, he breaks a most solemn promise to

God, and forsakes His standard for that of the enemy. Nothing can be more displeasing to God than this.

2. It is also most dangerous to the young man himself. Whoever spends his youth badly enters the wrong way, for the right way is the narrow road of virtue of which Our Saviour spoke. The right way is the way of obedience, of humility, of chastity. The crooked way is the broad one which leads to death; it is the way of the world, the way of iniquity. He who spends his youth in sin enters upon this way which leads from God and from heaven. To enter upon this road is certainly most prejudicial to the highest interests of a Christian young man. Nor is this all; he who enters upon the wrong road in his youth is most likely to continue on it through his life.

A stone detached from the mountain-side descends with continually accelerated force, a carriage on a steep incline rolls downward with greater and greater impetus, so that it becomes impossible to stop it. It is the same with a young man if he has once entered into the wrong way. Down he goes more and more rapidly, until he reaches the lowest depth and sinks in the morass of sin. This is not to be wondered at. The grace of God abused from day to day is day by day further withdrawn from him, its influence over his heart daily becomes weaker. The passions of the heart, fed like a flame with more and more fuel, become a great conflagration, the devil, who held him at first by a mere thread, now binds him to himself with strong ropes and chains of iron. Experience

tells us that this picture is only too true,—thousands of examples attest its correctness.

What injury a young man does to himself by sacrificing his early years to the service of the devil! Count, if you can, the sins he commits, and consider the punishment due to each one of them. Even if he amend his ways in his later days, how utterly lost these years are to eternal life! "The things thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in thy old age?" (Ecclus. xxv. 5.) What penance he must do to blot out the sins of his youth!

We have seen that the young men who lead good, virtuous lives are in the minority—to which class do you belong? Have you already set foot upon the wrong side? Do your parents, your superiors, complain of your disobedience, your negligence of religious duties, your nightly wanderings? Does your conscience rebuke you for sins of which you would blush before your parents and superiors? If so, O young man, I warn you to forsake your evil ways at once: "Turn to the Lord, and forsake thy sins" (Ecclus. xvii. 21). Keep in mind the divine command: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Forget not that the path to hell leads downward and that it is an easy one to travel upon, that the pace becomes continually more rapid and that it ends in a pool of fire. Forget not that the years of youth are precious and that, if they be well spent, they are more valuable than any worldly possession. The years of thy youth will be thy greatest sorrow or thy greatest consolation in the hour of death.

15. The Cross-ways.

"*He sat in the cross-way.*"—Gen. xxxviii. 14.

A TRAVELER is passing through a forest, the paths of which he has never traversed before. As he proceeds the way grows darker, the silence round about more profound, the loneliness more complete. The sun is sinking in the west, the light is fading from the tops of the trees, the shades of evening are falling. The traveler walks on with hastening steps. Suddenly the road divides and runs in two opposite directions. Which is the right one for him to follow? He is a stranger and does not know; all that he knows is that one of them leads to his destination, that it will take him to his much-beloved home, whereas the other will land him in a morass the poisonous exhalations of which infallibly prove fatal to all who approach it. He stands at the cross-ways to deliberate whither he shall turn; he is well aware of the importance of his decision. You, Christian young man, are his traveler, like him you are standing at the cross-ways. It is a question of life and death for you. The way before you will lead either into the light or into greater darkness, either to heaven or to hell. It is for you to determine which path you will follow; the decision rests

with yourself. The cross-ways of life shall be the subject of to-day's conference; we shall see that

I. It is unavoidable;

II. The right road can be easily recognized.

PART I.

1. Faith teaches us that in our pilgrimage to eternity we must come upon a cross-roads, that there is no means of escaping it. Holy Scripture speaks of various kingdoms; the first of these is the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord says: "I dispose to you a kingdom as My Father hath disposed to Me" (John xvii. 24), and "In My Father's house there are many mansions" (John xiv. 2). The Apostle also speaks of this kingdom: "The Lord will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. iv. 18). "Blessed be God and the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope; unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. i. 3, 4). And in the Apocalypse we read: "He took me up in spirit to a great and high mountain; and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God: and the light thereof was like to a precious stone" (Apoc. xxi. 10, 11). Holy Scripture also speaks of the kingdom of hell: "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. x. 28). "Depart from Me into everlasting fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels"

(Matt. xxv. 41). In the Apocalypse this is called "A pool of fire."

Thus faith teaches us that there are two kingdoms which are separated by an infinite distance from each other. Between these two kingdoms we have to make our choice; we must decide whether we will follow the road that leads to heaven or that which leads down to hell. Holy Scripture speaks also of two different laws.

The first is the law of holiness. In the commandments given to the Jews God says: "Ye shall be holy men to Me" (Ex. xxii. 31), "Be ye holy because I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. xiv. 2). In the writings of the Apostles we read: "He chose us in Him before the foundations of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity" (Ephes. i. 4). "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification" (1 Thess. iv. 7). "He that is just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still" (Apoc. xxii. 11). On the other hand, Holy Scripture tells us that "the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21). St. Paul speaks of the "law of sin in our members." Thus faith teaches us that there are two laws corresponding to the two kingdoms. We must choose which of these laws we will follow, the law of holiness or the law of iniquity. Likewise Holy Scripture speaks of two wills.

It speaks of the will of the spirit, the superior part of man. "He that soweth in the spirit shall reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 8). "Walk in the spirit"

(Gal. v. 6). "Be renewed in the spirit of your minds" (Ephes. iv. 23). Holy Scripture also speaks of the will of the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John iii. 6). "The flesh lusteth against the spirit" (Gal. v. 15). "When we were in the flesh we did bring forth fruit unto death" (Rom. vii. 5). St. John speaks of the concupiscence of the flesh as one of the great enemies of those who would lead spiritual lives.

There are then within us two laws and two wills directly opposed to each other; by one or the other of these man must allow himself to be ruled, either by the will of the spirit or the will of the flesh. There is, then, a cross-roads for us; faith tells us so, and

2. We see it with our own eyes. When we look upon the world round about us we see some of our fellow men journeying on the road that leads to heaven, whilst we see others evidently on the road that leads to hell; some are obeying the law of God and others the law of iniquity; some are governed by the will of the spirit, whilst others are subject to the will of the flesh. Some men are humble, others are haughty and proud; some are chaste, others impure; some are meek, others are quarrelsome; some are abstemious, others are given to excess; some are generous, others are miserly.

The same may be seen by looking into our own heart. The desires of our heart draw us in two different directions. We feel impulses toward that which is good, and we are also allured by that which is evil and sinful. We feel disposed to prayer and the per-

formance of good works, but before long we tire and are tempted to evil. We recognize the beauty of the virtue of chastity and wish to practise it, but carnal desires also disturb our mind. This strife within us is well described by St. Paul: "I am delighted with the law of God according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members" (Rom. xxii. 23).

There is a cross-ways for each and every one of us, a road that leads upward and one that leads downward, one to heaven and the other to hell. We all stand at this cross-roads and must choose between the ways. God grant that you may choose the right one. There is no difficulty in recognizing which is the road that we should follow.

PART II.

1. God has set a sign-post which points out the way that leads to heaven. This sign-post bears three inscriptions. The first reads: "The Way of Obedience." "Hearken to My voice," God says through the mouth of the prophet, "and I will be your God and you shall be My people" (Jer. vii. 23). This way leads to everlasting life; Christ and all the saints have walked it. St. Bonaventure calls it a ship that bears all safely to the eternal port, a key that unlocks the gates of heaven. Walk, I beseech you, in this way. Obey God in all that He commands, obey His representative on earth, the Church. Observe all her ordinances and commandments. Be obedient to your

parents and superiors. "Obey your prelates and be subject to them" (Hebr. xiii. 17).

The second inscription reads: "The Way of Chastity." "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." This way leads to God, and millions of faithful children of the heavenly Father have reached Him by it. These "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Apoc. xiv. 4). Walk, I beseech you, in this way. Let your thoughts be pure, let your words be pure, let your actions be pure. Let your whole demeanor be that of the chaste and pure; be pure in body and soul.

The third inscription is "The Way of Prayer." "Pray that you enter not into temptation," is the admonition of Our Lord to the Apostles. The path of prayer leads to life, and everyone who pursues this path perseveringly will attain to it. Fervent and devout prayer obtains for us all the graces that we need in order to vanquish the enemy of our salvation and to fulfil the duties of the Christian. Prayer is the key that unlocks the treasures of heaven for us. Whilst our petitions ascend to the throne of God, His grace descends down into our hearts. Walk, I beseech you, in this path. Be regular in prayer, pray with recollection, never omit your daily prayers. If your work does not permit you to spend much time in prayer, you can at least sanctify your days by a short, fervent prayer in the morning before your work. Make up by fervor what is lacking in the length of your prayers. On Sundays and holy days when you have plenty of time be instant in prayer, hear Mass devoutly

and sanctify the Sunday by conduct worthy of a Christian. In times of temptation take refuge in prayer. "By all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit" (Ephes. vi. 18).

2. The guide-post also shows the way to hell. It, too, has various inscriptions. The first of these is "The Way of Unbelief." "Be not faithless, but believing" (John xx. 27). The way of unbelief leads to eternal damnation. "He that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark xvi. 16). "To whom," asks St. Paul, "did He swear that they should not enter into His rest but to them that were incredulous?" (Hebr. iii. 18.) "The unbelieving shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone" (Apoc. xxi. 8). It is certain that no one can attain eternal happiness unless he be pleasing to God, and without faith it is impossible to please God. Without it no one can attain the adoption of the children of God, without it no one can obtain sanctifying grace and justification, nor be made partakers of the life in the world to come. Beware of entering upon this road, keep far from it. The spirit of the present day, more than that of any other time, is unfavorable to faith; hundreds of snares and pitfalls are prepared for the unwary. Bad books, bad associations, bad principles, bad example,—all these dangers are found in the path of the Christian young man. Many round about you are hostile to your religion, some will even ridicule it. Beware of them and do not enter the way of unbelief. Thousands have entered it to their eternal sorrow.

The second inscription is "The Way of Sin."

"Take heed," is the advice of Tobias to his son, "thou never consent to sin" (Tob. iv. 6). The way of sin, of mortal sin, leads to eternal perdition. "If the just man turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity according to all the abominations, which the wicked man useth to work, shall he live? All his justices, that he hath done, shall not be remembered: in the prevarication by which he hath prevaricated, and in his sin which he hath committed, in them he shall die" (Ezech. xviii. 24). Our Lord tells us that "the angels shall go out and shall separate the wicked from the good and shall cast them into the furnace of fire" (Matt. xiii. 49). St. Paul tells us: "There is now left to us a certain dreadful expectation of judgment and the rage of a fire which shall consume the adversaries" (Hebr. x. 27). Keep from the path of sin, for they that are found on it are swallowed up in hell. However many may hasten along on this road, however earnest may be the invitations to join them, keep far from this road. It leads to the land of misery and darkness where "the shadow of death and no order but everlasting horror dwelleth" (Job x. 22).

You are now acquainted with the cross-roads of your life; two roads are indicated; you must choose between them. One of these roads leads to eternal happiness, the other to eternal suffering. The way that you should take has been pointed out to you. Follow it; walk in the way of obedience, of chastity, of prayer. This is the right path, and its end is eternal glory.

16. The Path of Iniquity.

"Go not in the way of ruin, and thou shalt not stumble against the stones; trust not thyself to a rugged way, lest thou set a stumbling-block to thy soul."—Eccles. xxxii. 25.

THERE are roads that are unsafe, roads in which the traveler who follows them feels ill at ease; for many a one who has journeyed on them before him has been robbed and even murdered. The roads about Jericho were of this description; we read in the Gospels how "a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers" (Luke x. 30). A wise man avoids, if possible, journeying on such a road; or if he does so, he takes the necessary precautions to ensure his safety. In our pilgrimage to our eternal home a dangerous road lies open before us. To all appearances it leads to a happy goal, yet in reality it leads to the greatest misery. "There is a way that seemeth to a man right, and the ends thereof lead to death" (Prov. xvi. 25). Would that no man walked in that path! God grant that none of you may set his foot upon it! I will do my utmost to deter you from entering this perilous path, and I hope that you will take my warning in good part, and follow the counsels that I give you. I refer to the path of iniquity; and I shall ask you to consider

I. What sort of path it is;
II. Whither it leads.

PART I.

1. The path of iniquity is a most enticing path. It is a broad road, fenced in by no boundaries. The restraints imposed by the commandments of God are completely disregarded by those who travel upon it. The law of God says, "Thou shalt believe in one God." The sinner pays no heed to this. The law of God says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain." The sinner disregards that. The law of God says, "Thou shalt keep holy the Lord's day." The sinner does not care. The law of God says, "Thou shalt not do that which is impure, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife nor his goods." The sinner is not moved by any of these commandments. Thus he oversteps the boundaries which God has fixed and says in the words of King Pharao: "Who is the Lord that I should hear His voice? I know not the Lord" (Ex. v. 2). Even less regard does the sinner have for the restrictions imposed upon him by human authority. Men issue commands and make laws in the name of God whose representatives they are. Holy Scripture tells us to obey them: "Let every man be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but from God, and those that are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1). "Obey your prelates and be subject to them" (Hebr. xiii. 17). The sinner oversteps these boundaries boldly; he does not trouble himself

about the precepts of the Church, he does not trouble himself about what his parents and superiors command or forbid; he sets at naught the rules laid down by all authorities, and transgresses them as often as he pleases, i. e., as often as it is safe for him to do so.

The path of iniquity is further an even path. It does not lead to the heights, for the heights are the Christian virtues to which it ought to be our ambition to climb: chastity, meekness, humility, sobriety, patience. But to climb these heights is a matter requiring arduous toil and strenuous exertion. The sinner never takes a single step in an upward direction, he cares not for the exercise of Christian virtue, he will make no sacrifice for God or for his own soul. Nor, on the other hand, does the path of iniquity lead down into the valleys. The valleys are mortification and humiliation borne without murmur for the love of God; they are a lowly opinion of oneself, a readiness to acknowledge our faults, patience under provocation. It often costs us much more to descend into the valleys than to ascend to the heights. No wonder then that the sinner does not do this. He prefers to remain on the smooth, level road, on which he can walk onward with ease and comfort.

The path of iniquity is strewn with flowers. "Let us crown ourselves with roses before they are withered, let no meadow escape our riot. Let us everywhere leave tokens of joy" (Wisd. ii. 8, 9). These flowers represent the joys and indulgences of the world, of whose votaries it is said: "They sleep on beds of ivory and are wanton on their couches; they eat the

lambs of the flock and the calves out of the midst of the herd. They sing to the sound of the psaltery and drink wine out of bowls and anoint themselves with the best ointments" (Amos vi. 4, 5). The favor of the world smiles upon the sinner like a fair flower; all that is in the world attracts him; the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John ii. 16). The pleasures of the world appear to him as a bright blossom, especially the amusements of the young, and he hopes to cull these flowers by joining in the giddy dance, by taking his place at the gambling-table, by indulging his passions. Thus the path of sin is a wide, level road strewn with flowers, and for this reason proves most attractive and alluring. No wonder that

2. The path of iniquity is a much-frequented one. "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat" (Matt. vii. 13). Many indeed there are who walk on this path in their youth. Scarcely has a young man left the days of childhood when the temptations of life crowd in upon him. They come from within and from without. The flesh, the world, and the powers of hell assail him. Countless numbers yield to these temptations, indulge the "youthful desires" of which the Apostle speaks. David lamented the sins of his youth (Ps. xxiv. 7). And the Wise Man says: "I looked out of the window of my house through the lattice, and I saw little ones; I beheld a foolish young man who passeth through the street by the corner. A woman meeteth him... immediately he followed her as an ox led to be a

victim, and as a lamb playing the wanton, and not knowing that he is drawn like a fool to bonds, till the arrow pierce his liver" (Prov. vii. 6-24). A glance at the ways of young men convinces us of the truth of these words. How many young men who can be said to be little more than children enter upon the path of sin! They are ensnared by pride, the love of the world, intolerance of restraint, self-will, and impure desires.

Many also walk in the way of sin when they have grown older. Holy Scripture speaks of foolish and imprudent old men, saying: "The things that thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in thy old age?" (Ecclus. xxv. 4.) One would look upon the errors of youth with more indulgence if the path of sin were forsaken with riper years; but it is only too true that "a young man according to his way even when he is old will not depart from it" (Prov. xxii. 6). A man will continue to pursue the way on which he once entered, he goes on ever further into the wilderness of sin. Drunkenness and impurity especially gain a strong hold upon the heart. Listen to me, young men; many of you have already passed the earlier years of youth, the days of light-heartedness and frivolity are over; some of you have long ago reached man's estate. Have you overcome the temptations incident to youth? I will not answer this question for you. Let each one look earnestly into his own heart, and he will read the answer there: "There is no just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not" (Eccles. vii. 21).

PART II.

1. The path of iniquity leads away from happiness. Faith tells us this with no uncertain words. Man is created for the enjoyment of eternal happiness. "God hath appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the purchase of salvation" (1 Thess. v. 9). "God will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 5). This happiness is an exceeding great one. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). And again: "We know in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. We see now in a glass as in a dark manner, but then face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 9). From all this we learn that the eternal happiness intended for us is something so sublime that it transcends the powers of the human mind to conceive it. The glory, the beauty, the majesty, which will constitute our happiness is above all that we can think or feel, or express in words. It exceeds all our hopes, all our beliefs, all our wishes and desires.

The path of sin leads in the opposite direction, far away from happiness. This the Gospel teaches us; it repeats again and again the doctrine that sin deprives us of heaven. "Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God? Do not err; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor thieves, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10). Raise your eyes to heaven and look upon the realms

of glory and behold the countless multitudes of blissful souls—the redeemed out of all nations and tribes and tongues. Not a single soul is there that departed from this life in the state of mortal sin. "Without are dogs and sorcerers, and unchaste and murderers and servers of idols, and anyone that loveth and maketh a lie" (Apoc. xxii. 15). The way of sin leads

2. Into eternal misery. It leads into the land of darkness. "They shall be cast into exterior darkness" (Matt. viii. 12). The end of the sinner is frequently called darkness in the Scriptures. It is first employed in reference to the man who went to the marriage-feast without a wedding-garment. Holy Scripture also speaks of it as the "land of darkness where the shadow of death dwelleth" (Matt. x. 22). What an awful doom, to be condemned to dwell in darkness forever, to be where no stars ever pierce the gloom, where no light penetrates the dismal obscurity!

The way of sin also leads to the lake of fire and despair. It is called a "furnace of fire," a "pool burning with fire and brimstone." That is were the path of sin will ultimately end. In the days of His wrath God formed the abyss of hell; He enkindled the fire that is inextinguishable, and into it will be cast the sinner that persists in his evil ways, the drunkard, the impure, the proud, the disobedient. "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. xxv. 41). Alas, what an awful fate to be condemned to eternal burnings in flames that penetrate the marrow and the bone, flames that cannot be extinguished and must burn forever!

Thus we see whither the path of iniquity leads; to the "land of darkness," to the "lake of fire," where there is despair. And yet a great number prefer to walk on this road, many have perhaps advanced far upon it; some are perhaps nearing the end and are on the incline that leads directly into the abyss; a few steps more and the ground will give way under their feet and they will be precipitated into the pit of misery and eternal suffering. Christian young men, if you do not fear sin, fear the place to which it leads; fear the perpetual, inextinguishable fire, which ever consumes and is never consumed. "Go not in the way of sin" (Ecclus. xxxii. 25). "Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent; for if thou comest near to them, they will take hold on thee" (Ecclus. xxi. 2, 3). If there should be any among you who have entered upon the way of sin, stop and think what will be the end of such a course. Turn back this very day and "bring forth fruits of penance" (Matt. iii. 8). If you have not as yet set your feet upon this dangerous path, if you have never committed a mortal sin, give thanks to God, and walk circumspectly. "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41).

17. The First Fall.

"*He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.*"—1 Cor. x. 12.

A FALL often causes great pain, sore wounds, and may even cause death. Many a man that has fallen from some height or has rolled headlong down some precipice has been picked up a corpse. Cases are known where people who have slipped and fallen on level ground have thereby sustained fatal injuries. Every prudent man takes care not to fall, especially in places where there is more danger of falling than in others. More serious by far than falls that injure the body are falls that hurt the soul. These falls are unfortunately even more frequent than bodily falls. St. Paul warns us against them with all the dignity of his apostolic office: "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." Wherefore, Christian young men, let us be watchful against these falls. Let us take every precaution against falling into sin; let us be on our guard against the first fall. And why this? Because the first fall is especially sad on account both of

I. What it is in itself; and
II. The consequences.

PART I.

By the first fall I mean yielding for the first time to mortal sin, committing the first mortal sin. To commit a venial sin is also to fall, but the fall is not so grievous a one and permits of an easy and speedy cure; for "the Lord is full of mercy and taketh away iniquity and wickedness" (Numb. xiv. 88). It is quite otherwise with mortal sin, which inflicts deep and lasting wounds, wounds which not unfrequently seem to resist all remedies, and ultimately cause eternal death. The prophet Jeremias says of the people of Israel: "They have refused to receive correction, and have made their faces harder than the rock" (Jer. v. 3). The first deviation from the path of justice is especially to be deplored, because

1. It is an offence against God that implies the greatest ingratitude. Mortal sin! Do you really know the meaning of this term? Mortal sin is contempt of God, rejection of God. "Be astonished, ye heavens, at this and ye gates thereof be very desolate, saith the Lord. For My people have done two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. ii. 12, 13). Mortal sin! On hearing this word horror runs through the angelic choirs, a feeling of terror seizes every heart that still looks to God with faith and love. Mortal sin! An affront to the majesty of the Most High, an act of scorn and defiance to His holy law. "Who is the Lord that I should hear His voice? I know not the Lord" (Ex. v. 2). Thus spoke proud Pharao.

"Thou hast burst My bonds and hast said I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20). Such is the attitude of the sinner. Well did St. Anselm write: "If sin in all its hideousness were set before me on the one side and the torments of hell on the other, and I were asked to make a choice, I should choose hell in preference to sin." Thus by the first sin man renders himself guilty of an offence against the majesty of God and shows an ingratitude blacker than can be conceived by us.

God has bestowed many and great benefits upon you. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) Think of all the gifts of nature. You owe to God your being and your preservation in life. "God created man of the earth and made him after His own image" (Ecclus. xvii. 1). How many hours have elapsed since you came into being, and every one of them is replete with the benefits of God. Number the stars of the heavens, count the drops of water in the ocean; it is equally as much beyond you to enumerate the blessings of God. Then consider the gifts of grace. "Knowing that you were not redeemed with contemptible things as gold and silver, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. i. 18). Who can appreciate aright the work of the Redemption and the graces that flow from it? God promises still greater gifts; He promises you the heavenly kingdom, a life of infinite happiness, the possession of Himself. What base ingratitude it is, then, on your part to offend God by mortal sin, since He is your chief benefactor, to whose bounty you owe all that you have and all that you hope for! Consider further

2. What you lose by mortal sin. By mortal sin you lose the gem of innocence received in Baptism. This is a jewel of incomparable value, it is the soul's brightest ornament, which gives her the greatest beauty. St. Chrysostom describes in eloquent words the happiness of the soul clothed in innocence: "Behold, those who but a short time before were captives now enjoy the delights of freedom; those who were straying in a strange land are now among the Church's citizens; those who groveled in the defilements of sin have now cast their lot with the just. Not only are they free men, but they are saints; not only saints, but children of God; not only children of God, but also joint-heirs with Christ; not only heirs with Christ, but members of His body; not only members of His body, but temples of the Holy Ghost; not only temples of the Holy Ghost, but co-workers with the Spirit. Behold, O Christian, how abundant and how rich are the gifts bestowed upon thee in Baptism. It appears to many that the gift of heaven consists merely in the remission of sin, but there are many glories which are promised with it." This pearl of innocence is lost by the first fall, and what is saddest, it is lost irrevocably. It can never again be recovered, even though it be sought for during a whole lifetime with bitter tears.

By the first fall into mortal sin man loses the chief one of all the gifts of God, the title to eternal happiness. He is no longer an "heir of God and joint-heir with Christ." If he departs this life without repentance, he will knock in vain at the portals of life,

he will ask in vain for admission into the celestial kingdom. The only answer he will receive will be: "Amen, I say to you, I know you not" (Matt. xxv. 12). An angel with a flaming sword will stand there to drive him away. What an awful calamity, to lose the innocence of Baptism! It is a great loss when a house burns down or when a ship sinks beneath the waves, it is a great loss when a storm destroys the crops of the year, it is a great loss when a king is driven from his throne, but incomparably greater is the loss of the soul when the robe of baptismal innocence is snatched from her.

How lamentable, then, is the first fall regarded in itself. All the misfortunes of the world; the loss of all possessions, the loss of reputation, the loss of health, of life itself, are not as great a loss as the loss sustained through the commission of the first mortal sin.

PART II.

1. The first fall is extremely sad also on account of the consequences it entails. The first of these is the eternal painful memory of it. Even if a man should rise again from his fall, do penance and be reconciled with God, something still remains. There is a sharp thorn in the heart, a painful remembrance in his soul. He cannot forget his fall, he cannot banish from his mind the memory that he has offended God grievously and lost the innocence of Baptism. This remembrance will abide with him as long as he lives, and will cause him many a heartache. Especially is this true when death approaches, and the memory of

past sins revives. This memory is often so strong that it becomes difficult for the priest to reassure the dying man of God's pardon. David says concerning his past sins: "Every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears" (Ps. vi. 7). St. Aloysius, who had committed some slight fault in his boyhood, always remembered it with sorrow of heart. How is it with you? You know well the many faults you have committed, some perhaps grievous; you know the day and the hour when you sacrificed your baptismal innocence to some worldly desire. Can this be indifferent in your eyes? It is only with sorrow and deep regret that you can look back upon that day and that hour. The first fall often brings with it still graver consequences.

2. It reduces the soul to a condition of spiritual weakness; it frequently leads to a habit of sin. The first fall is also the first step in a downward direction on the road that leads to hell. The second fall happens more easily than the first. God's assistance is not as strong as it was when innocence still reigned in the heart; His grace is not given to the unfaithful in the abundance that it is bestowed on His faithful child. Besides, the evil inclinations of the heart when once let loose crave more strongly for gratification; the devil exercises greater influence upon the will which has become subject to him. Thus the second fall often follows soon upon the first, and then comes the third and the fourth, and thus it continues. Lower and lower the unhappy sinner descends on the road that leads to hell. Sin indulged in a few times rapidly

becomes habitual. "A young man according to his way even when he is old will not depart from it" (Prov. xxii. 6).

The habit of sin produces hardness of heart. The man who sins habitually is not far off from obduracy and insensibility. Repeated falls weaken his will for good, while his evil desires grow continually stronger. All admonitions to repent, whether they come from without or from his conscience, are a weariness to him, and he turns a deaf ear to those that remind him of the necessity of repentance and amendment. He becomes like those addressed by the prophet: "I know that thou art stubborn, and thy neck is an iron sinew and thy forehead of brass" (Is. xlviii. 4).

Obstinate persistence in sin leads to the destruction of the sinner. If a stone is removed from the foundation of a house, another will soon become detached, and if the matter is left unheeded a third and a fourth, until the whole house falls in ruins. This is often the case with the sinner. The first fall brings a second, and the downward path once entered upon is pursued with ever increasing rapidity, until habitual sin finally brings on eternal reprobation. The eternal downfall of the soul results, the gates of heaven are closed forever and the abyss of hell yawns before it. But is not a deathbed repentance possible? Yes, the sinner may repent in the last moment of his life; but it is not at all probable. "Man knoweth not his own end" (Eccles. ix. 12). Death comes like a thief in the night. But even if he be not called away suddenly, is that all that is necessary to be saved? No, it frequent-

ly happens that the sinner when laid upon his death-bed is not disposed and does not wish to hear of repentance, and breathes forth his soul, as he lived, in sin.

You see now the dangers of the first fall. How many have been led by their first fall downward step by step to the gates of hell! Even if the sinner regains his foothold after the first fall, there remains still a bitter remembrance of his sin, and the precious gift of innocence received in Baptism is lost forever. Be on your guard against the first fall. You cannot imagine, and no words of mine can describe, the injury done to the soul by the first mortal sin. "Therefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). "Be sober and watch" (1 Pet. v. 8). Do not imagine one sin is of little account; that one sin kills the soul, and if not repented of will cast it into hell. If the tempter tells you to commit this sin but once, be firm and say: No, not once, never. But perhaps there are some young men here before me who have committed their first mortal sin, who have perhaps repeated it again and again. To such I will say that for them there are but two alternatives, either repentance or damnation, penance or hell. Which will you choose? Make your choice; it concerns your eternal welfare and it concerns you alone.

18. Noxious Insects that Attack Young Vines.

"Thou shalt plant a vineyard, and dig it: and shalt not drink the wine, nor get any fruit thereof: because it shall be wasted with worms."—Deut. xxviii. 39.

AMONG the chastisements which almighty God threatened to send upon the people of Israel in case they should disregard His holy law, this one is also mentioned: "Thou shalt plant a vineyard, and dig it: and shalt not drink the wine, nor get any fruit thereof: because it shall be wasted with worms." How sad it is when insects of all sorts deposit their eggs on the vine, and the brood when hatched crawls on and devours blossom after blossom, leaf after leaf, so that after a short time all that is left are a few branches totally stripped and withered. If this sight is sad in the order of nature, how much more so is it in the spiritual order, when it is not a vine in a worldly vineyard, but one in the vineyard of God! We are all such vines; Our Lord said: "I am the vine and you are the branches" (John xv. 5). By Baptism we are all grafted into this spiritual vine; consequently we ought to grow up as branches of this choice vine and bring rich fruit, the grapes of immortality. But it often happens that parasites infect the vine, and their ravages if left unchecked prove most detrimental

to the branches and destroy the fruit. These "worms" of Scripture attack with preference the young shoots; the vices they represent attack the hearts of young men, in the spring-time of their lives. We will to-day consider these worms or insects a little more closely, and we will see

I. What they are;

II. What harm they do.

PART I.

1. Evil desires are the first source of injury designated in the Scriptures by the name of worms. Concupiscence is the seed and source of sin introduced into the world by Adam. By the sin of our first parents corruption and ruin spread over the whole human race, like a vast inundation devastates a fair and fruitful country. And among the results of this sin not the least is the evil concupiscence which like a noxious germ is inherited by every one of Adam's descendants. Through Adam's sin mankind lost its innocence and purity. Hence comes the manifold corruption of the soul, the sinful impulses, perverse affections, unlawful pleasures, thoughts, and acts that lead to bitter remorse. Holy Scripture often speaks of this source of evil within us. "The imagination and thought of man's heart are evil from his youth" (Ex. xviii. 21). "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured" (James i. 14). "I know," says St. Paul, "that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say in my flesh, that which is good" (Rom.

vii. 18). We are continually reminded of this seed of evil within us, be it by sinful thoughts or unlawful acts. This is the germ which Adam introduced into the vineyard of God and which we only too often foster and cultivate.

This germ cannot be extirpated from the human heart; it is in our very blood, it grows with our growth, and dies only with our death; it is an integral part of our fallen nature. Evil as its effects are, its mere presence in the heart is not a sin. The Council of Trent expressly declares that concupiscence is not a sin. (Sess. 5, decr. de pecc. orig.) This evil seed is, however, often fostered by man so that its poison infects him and results in sin. How little young men guard their eyes, how wanting they are in reserve and modesty in their demeanor! How often they cherish bad thoughts and indulge in evil desires! Thus the evil is fostered and developed, the fire smoldering beneath the ashes is enkindled until it bursts out in flames that flare up and cause a great conflagration which consumes the whole edifice.

2. Another source of the plague that infests young vines are the evil passions. These are no longer mere germs, they are the brood come to life, already full-grown, which manifests itself from time to time. By this we mean the special occasions of sin. In many a human heart the evil passions lie dormant, and make themselves felt on certain occasions, in times of temptation. Some can observe perfect moderation in drink as long as they stay away from saloons or from certain persons; but if they once cross the threshold of a

saloon or meet with certain companions they are sure of going to excess. There are others whose language is above reproach as long as they remain away from evil company; but the moment they come in contact with such company they seem to strive to outdo the worst amongst them. Likewise there are young men who lead chaste and pure lives until they form undesirable acquaintances; and then they drink in sin like water. These are all instances that prove the truth of the warning of Holy Scripture: "If thou comest near to sins, they will lay hold on thee" (Ecclus. xxi. 2).

In the case of others, worms that lay waste the vineyard are continually manifest; they have contracted habits of sin. There are souls that never get rid of these insects. Every day they give way to anger, every day they utter blasphemies, every day they give way to unclean desires and evil actions. Every time they approach the sacraments they have the same mortal sins to confess and thus it goes on from year to year. Habits of long standing engender a kind of necessity; it is like an iron chain which human power cannot break—to do so requires the omnipotent mercy of God.

Now we see what the worms are that Holy Scripture speaks of as devastating the vineyard. There are the germs of evil and there are the developed insects that live on tender shoots. The germs are the innate concupiscence and the developed brood are the passions. Look into your heart; there you will find the seeds of evil. "I find then a law that when I have

a will to do good evil is present to me," says St. Paul (Rom. vii. 21). He also speaks of the sin that dwells within us. See whether the evil brood have already developed in you, whether they have already spun their nets around the leaves of the vine, whether passion has gained dominion over your soul, the passion of anger, of intemperance, of impurity. If so, your condition is a sad one; for these insects are extremely injurious to the vine for two reasons:—

PART II.

1. They prevent them from bearing fruit, since they cause the blossoms to fall off. If a gardener finds that the fruit trees are infested with caterpillars in the spring, he takes all possible means of destroying this pest. If he does not succeed in this, there is no hope for the buds; they will be attacked and devoured and the blossoms will fall off. It is the same in the supernatural order; unless the germs of sin in the heart are rendered harmless, the passions will grow apace and will work sad havoc among the blossoms, i. e., the good resolutions, devout prayers, holy aspirations. If sinful impulses are once given a permanent place in the soul, delight in prayer will be gone, good resolutions will fade away as flowers fade and die when their roots are attacked by worms. And when the blossom falls there is no hope for fruit.

God has ordained that the spiritual vine should bear fruit. "I have appointed you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should abide" (John xv. 16). "We are His workmanship created

in Christ Jesus to good works" (Ephes. ii. 10). The fruit that the vine of God's vineyard should bring forth is the fruit of obedience, chastity, humility, meekness. If the insects attack the vine we cannot expect this fruit, for they feed on the blossoms and destroy their fertility; blossoms that are withered and worm-eaten cannot bear fruit. It will be the same as with the tree in the Gospel: "The gardener came seeking fruit and there was none (Luke xiii. 6). Besides destroying the blossoms and the fruit, the insects of the spiritual vine

2. Cause the death of the vine itself. They cause the sap to cease flowing. The sap of the spiritual vine is the grace of God. If the soul is deprived of this it will dry up and wither like a plant that has no moisture. Alas for the soul in which the insects get the mastery, in which the evil passions rule supreme! The good angel leaves such a soul, God Himself retires from it; and thus the operation of grace is impeded and the celestial sap ceases to circulate in it and invigorate it. The soul of such a one languishes and grows feeble, and the signs of spiritual death are everywhere evident; the worms that lay waste the vineyard have done their work.

Even in spots where the face of nature is fair and flourishing one sees occasionally a barren tree whose root is decayed and whose branches are dead. If we ask how this can be accounted for, we receive the answer: It is the work of worms that have gotten at the roots of the tree. In like manner the worms of sin, even if there be but one, destroy the life of the soul.

One mortal sin admitted into the soul will cause its spiritual death. "When concupiscence hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, but sin when it is completed begetteth death" (James i. 15). Sin begets death, it kills the soul. A soul that is dead cannot be brought back to life except through a miracle of God's mercy; its ultimate fate is to be cast into the fire. "They shall gather him up and cast him into the fire and he burneth" (John xv. 6). "The Son of man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire" (Matt. xiii. 41).

You now perceive that as in the order of nature so in the order of grace the insects that make their nests in the vine and attack the young shoots cause great ravages; they prevent the vine from flourishing and bearing fruit; they destroy its life. The divine gardener has planted a vast vineyard here upon earth, He bears on His hands the marks of hard work, He has shed his own blood to irrigate it. With all justice He can ask: "What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done to it?" (Is. v. 4.) All of you are vines of this vineyard, and all of you are bound to bear fruit. But alas, the fatal worms! Beware of them, allow none of them entrance into your heart. You cannot eradicate the germs, it is true, but you can prevent them from developing into mature insects. The first moment they begin to stir, crush them, tread them under foot. "Go not after thy lusts, and turn away from thy will" (Ecclus.

xviii. 30). Doubtless, when these enemies have grown to maturity and have gained strength it is a difficult matter to render them harmless. They resist and twine themselves about you. Be not disheartened; declare war upon your passions whatever they may be, whether drunkenness, gambling, impurity, anger, or whatsoever else. "Let not sin reign in your mortal body" (Rom. vi. 12). And since you are much too weak to combat them in your own strength, fortify yourself with the grace of God by prayer and the frequent reception of the sacraments. With God's aid you will be able to destroy the pest, that is, with the aid of grace you will conquer your evil passions and bring forth fruit for life eternal.

19. The Young Man's Evil Angels.

"*Let them alone, they are blind, and leaders of the blind.*"—Matt. xv. 14.

Our Lord says of Himself: "I am the door; by Me if any man enter he shall be saved" (John x. 9). To cling to Him faithfully and steadfastly, to hold to His faith, and to rejoice in His love, are the way that leads to eternal salvation. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given unto men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Unhappily, countless numbers turn away from the Author of life, they forsake the Shepherd of souls, whose goodness is infinite and eternal, and follow the voice of the tempter, although Our Lord repeatedly declares: "All others, as many as have come, are thieves and robbers" (John x. 8). Young men especially are prone to make this mistake. They turn a deaf ear to the voice of truth and listen to the tongues of liars; they turn away from the good angels and follow the evil angels who lead them to perdition. In order that you may avoid these evil angels, I wish to-day

I. To describe them to you;
II. To warn you against them.

PART I.

1. The first of these evil angels is concupiscence. Original sin, the fall of our first parents, brought great misery upon mankind. The human heart, where originally a sweet heavenly peace resided, became disturbed and agitated like the surface of the sea under the action of a storm. "The eyes of both were opened and they perceived that they were naked" (Gen. iii. 7). The passions awoke. This inclination to evil is inherent in every human heart from birth. St. Paul mentions it: "I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. vii. 23). These evil inclinations are summed up as: the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life. In other words, they are avarice, lust, and pride. This proneness to evil is one of the bad angels that seek to guide young men in the wrong path.

What ought to be the aim of the young man? He is told: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Ecclus. xii. 1). St. Paul tells Titus: "Young men exhort that they be sober" (Tit. ii. 6). They should be religious and sober, but their perverse inclinations allure them to the opposite. Sensual pleasure appeals to them, saying: Why be so strict and scrupulous about the custody of the eyes? You are not going to live like a hermit alone in the desert. Enjoy what the world has to offer you. Avarice calls to them: Why should you be so exact and conscient-

ious in money matters? Look out for your own interest,—others do the same. Avail yourself of the opportunities that offer to acquire something for yourself. Pride lifts up her voice and addresses them: Why do you allow others to boss you about? You are old enough to shake off the supervision of your parents and superiors. Why should you always occupy an inferior position; are you never to be your own master? Are you never to be allowed to do as you please? Thus the evil inclinations of the human heart speak to the young man and attempt to lead him from the straight road.

He who listens to the voice of his evil inclinations is on a steep road where a sudden fall is imminent, and where to fall means to fall continually lower. "If thou give thy soul to thy desires she will make thee a joy to thy enemies" (Ecclus. xviii. 30) is the warning of the Holy Spirit. If you listen to your evil desires you will fall into many sins and the devil will rejoice at your fall. "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being allured and drawn away. Then when concupiscence hath conceived it begetteth death" (James i. 14). "The flesh lusteth against the spirit" (Gal. ix. 15). What is the result if the carnal desires obtain the mastery? "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury" (Gal. v. 19). St. Paul draws an appalling picture of the lengths to which men may go when they listen to their passions: "God gave them up to the desires of their heart, being filled with iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice" (Rom. i. 29),

Holy Scripture narrates various examples that ought to be a warning to us. Cain did not resist his evil tendencies and became the murderer of his brother; David did not guard his eyes and he fell into the sins of adultery and murder; Judas did not curb his love for money and he sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Our own conscience can teach us the same lesson. How many times has it not been that we have fallen into sin, and was it not because we did not resist our evil inclinations promptly? Once you were innocent and you did not know sin; is it not perhaps the case with you that you are no longer in that state of innocence and purity? How did the change come about? Was it not that your passions awoke, and, instead of combating them, you allowed them to obtain the mastery? The consequence is that now your heart is stained with many and grievous sins.

2. The world is another evil angel to the young man. You must live amongst men and associate with them. Unhappily there is amongst the multitude that you meet a great number of wicked men who have lost all respect for piety, faith, and morality. These are called in the Scripture "false prophets," "deceitful scoffers," "ungodly men walking according to their own desires" (Jude xvi.). Association with men of this kind is especially harmful to the young, whose faith they seek to undermine and whose morals they try to corrupt. They do this by ridiculing religious beliefs and practices. They make little of the word of God and the sacraments. They calumniate the priests and try to shake the confidence which young

people have in them. Slurs of this nature are often the staple of their conversation. Thus the faith of their hearers is weakened and the way for irreligion and unbelief is cleared. What they cannot effect by words, they accomplish by deeds. Their rejection of the supernatural is evident in their lives; they act as if there were no heaven or hell. The strongest faith is affected by constant association with such persons. They are not content with undermining the faith of those that associate with them—they must also corrupt their morals. They preach the gospel of iniquity. They say openly: "Let us enjoy the good things that are present" (Wisd. ii. 6). They go further, they also say: "Let us lie in wait for the just" (Wisd. ii. 12). They strike at the root of modesty and purity; and young men, only too prone to levity, drink in their words and jests with avidity. How many pious and well-conducted men have been corrupted by evil companions! How many have been led in the way of sin by evil conversation and bad example!

PART II.

1. These evil angels rob you of your happiness. They snatch from you your innocence, which is a pearl beyond all earthly valuation. "Oh, how beautiful is a chaste generation" (Wisd. iv. 1). Your evil inclination will rob you of it, evil companions will rob you of it if you allow them dominion over your heart. Commit but one mortal sin, and the pearl is lost forever, gone beyond recall. You may bewail its loss with bitter tears, you may repent and expiate the

fault—all is of no avail, it is lost, and lost irretrievably.

These evil angels rob you of your peace of mind. How happy is the youth conscious of innocence! This consciousness sweetens all that is bitter to men, it transforms earth into heaven, for a good conscience is like the joy of paradise. How cheerfully such a one begins his work in the morning; everywhere there is an atmosphere of peace. One mortal sin is enough to destroy this peace and happiness. The soul becomes agitated and troubled; apprehension seizes upon the heart: "A sudden and unlooked-for fear was come upon them" (Wisd. xvii. 14).

2. The evil angels cast you into the deepest misery. First they cause you to fall into sin; and sin is the most terrible of all calamities that can overtake man. Sickness, fire, famine, death, are fearful calamities, but worse than all these is sin. It is an offence against God and involves the loss of divine grace; it is an eternal evil, whilst the others are only temporal. Through sin the richest man becomes more wretched than a pauper; through sin the happiest man becomes extremely unhappy. Viewed in the light of faith, it were better that the whole universe should be destroyed than that one mortal sin be committed.

The evil angels finally guide their victims to hell. The road on which they lead them leads to no other goal. "Whosoever," says St. Gregory, "is carried away by sin, he will infallibly be swallowed up by hell."

What is to be done, then? If you love your soul, be

on your guard against sin. You know that evil angels lie in wait for you, you are aware what the consequences will be if you trust yourselves to their guidance. Resist your evil propensities, avoid wicked men who seek to rob you of your faith and your innocence. "Follow not in thy strength the desires of thy heart" (Ecclus. v. 2). "Let not sin reign in your mortal body so as to obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. vi. 12). Stamp out the spark before it becomes a flame, stifle the evil thought before it gains possession of you. Pray fervently that you may conquer in the conflict with evil. "Take no pleasure in riotous assemblies" (Ecclus. xviii. 32). "Use not much the company of her that is a dancer" (Ecclus. ix. 3). Beware of sinful company.

20. The Occasion of Sin.

"*He lifted up all them with his hook, he drew them in his drag, and gathered them into his net; for this he will be glad and rejoice.*"—Hab. i. 15.

You all know full well that the devil lays snares for the souls of men. "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. v. 8). He rejoices in his iniquity when he succeeds in capturing a soul in his net. As a fisherman casts out his net to catch fish, so the devil seeks to capture souls. Hence we may apply to him the words of the prophet: "He lifted up all them with his hook, he drew them in his drag, and gathered them into his net; for this he will be glad and rejoice." He has various nets that he casts out for souls, but there is one especially that is more profitable to him than the rest; and it is upon this net that I wish to speak to you to-day. This net is the occasion of sin; by it

I. He captures a great number of souls;
II. Few of those caught in it ever escape.

PART I.

The devil employs various nets for capturing souls. "He sows discord, excites anger, enkindles evil desires, suggests shameful actions, instigates to deceit and fraud," says St. Ambrose. Yet the net that brings him the greatest returns is the occasion of sin. This is

1. The most dangerous snare of the devil. There is nothing that has such a power for evil, that exercises such a fascination over the heart of man as the proximate occasion of doing evil. Put the full glass before a man of inclinations to drink, and all his good resolutions vanish; bring a young man who has a love for gambling into the presence of companions who are engaged in it, and see if he can resist. How forcibly the frail heart is drawn by the occasion to sin! Every one who has the inclination to some fault in him can testify to the seductiveness of the opportunity offered to him.

The opportunity to sin is so dangerous because of the frailty of human nature. How can a man resist the impetuous torrent of an on-rushing stream, how resist the storm? He is like a child in the face of the forces of nature. The case is much the same in regard to the occasion of sin. It is like a mountain-torrent overflowing its banks; it is like the storm raging and roaring with blind force, devastating all before it; it is mightier than a warrior armed with sword and spear. How can a man resist such violence? It is true, God offers sufficient grace to all; and St. Paul says, "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). Yet if a man courts temptations, seeks the occasion of sin, or remains in it when he might escape from it, he can no longer depend on the assistance of divine grace; divine help has not been promised to the presumptuous and the foolhardy. God does not protect those who wilfully expose themselves to the danger of sin by seeking the occasion or

remaining in it without necessity. What will happen to him who is found in the occasion of sin, when God withdraws His help from him? He is left to his natural weakness, so frail that Sacred Scripture compares him to a "fleeting shadow" (Job xiv. 2), a "spider's web" (Ps. lxxxix. 9), "fuel for the fire" (Ps. ci. 4), the "flower of the grass" (James i. 10). Thus he stands alone, when the blast sweeps over him, when he is tried by the fire of temptation. What else can happen but that he be swept away by the storm and consumed by the fire!

How dangerous is the occasion of sin, especially the proximate occasion of which I speak principally! "If thou comest near to sins, they will lay hold on thee" (Ecclus. xxi. 2). Listen to the words of St. Alphonsus: "The malignant enemy prowls around the soul, watching for an opportunity to affect an entrance and to take possession of the soul. With this intention he presents occasions of sin to her, seeking by this means to gain a foothold in the soul. He is ever on the lookout to descry a loophole by which he may enter. If the soul allows herself to be exposed to the occasion of sin, he is quick to avail himself of it."

From all that has been said it is clear that occasions of sin are the most efficacious net of Satan to ensnare souls. Through opportunity the allurement becomes stronger and the strength of man to resist becomes smaller; hence it is often easy to predict a fall. The most pious resolutions and the most solemn vows prove of little avail in the presence of a proximate

occasion to sin. St. Peter protested: "Although I should die together with Thee, I will not deny Thee" (Mark xiv. 31). Scarcely one brief hour had elapsed before the same Apostle exposed himself to the occasion of sin and denied his Master and Lord three times.

2. Occasions of sin are very frequent; otherwise the devil would not have the success in leading men astray that he has. We walk in a land abounding with snares and pitfalls. "The life of man is a warfare upon earth" (Job vii. 1). The assistance of divine grace is sufficient to meet with and to conquer the ordinary occasions of sin that present themselves; and when extraordinary temptations present themselves, if we have not rashly put ourselves in their way, God gives us also extraordinary graces. No one need fall into sin. Consoling as this thought is, experience also warns us that countless men rush thoughtlessly into the occasion of sin and fall. The proximate occasions of sin are many and frequent: drink, companions, anti-religious books and newspapers, and, above all, too great intimacy with women; all these things are a constant danger to the young man. These temptations present themselves continually to young men, be they in the city or in the country; no spot is so secluded as to be free from danger.

Since the occasions of sin are so dangerous and so numerous, what is there to be feared from them? We have to fear this one thing, that hundreds will be ensnared by sin and become a prey to hell. "He that

loveth danger shall perish therein" (Ecclus. iii. 27). St. Augustine says that to expose oneself to the proximate occasion of sin and to fall into sin are one and the same thing. Hence the devil rejoices when he sees young men frequent places where the occasions of sin abound. He is more certain of his prey than is the angler who sees the fish playing about the hook on his line. Let each one look into his own heart, and ask himself whether he has not frequently fallen into sin by yielding to circumstances, whether he has not yielded to sins of intemperance, of impurity, of anger, of blasphemy, because he did not avoid the occasion of these sins. If the devil were to be deprived of all his means of seducing men but one, he would undoubtedly keep that of the occasion of sin.

PART II.

1. Few that put themselves in the occasion of sin escape without falling, because they do not forsake the occasion as soon as it is realized. They do not follow the admonition of Our Lord: "If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off; if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off; if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out" (Mark ix. 42-46). What a sacrifice this demands! Few are willing to make a sacrifice for the sake of their salvation. They do not flee from temptation. When they go to confession, the priest exhorts them to give up the occasion of sin in which they are living, to avoid certain companions, to give up the company they are keeping, to stay from certain places. Similar admonitions are given them at times by their

parents or kind friends. Instead of following them, they think the priest too severe and seek another confessor in the hope that he will judge more leniently about the matter; they resent the interference of others; they are like "the deaf asp that stoppeth her ears" (Ps. lvii. 5). Examples are plentiful of how men fall into sins because they do not avoid the occasion of them; the fall of others should disclose to us the abyss into which they fall who do not avoid the occasion of intemperance, of evil companions, of dangerous intimacies. Examples abound of men who have lost their virtue, their good name, their health, their faith; yet they do not seem to be sufficient to deter those who love the danger of sin.

Dangerous sickness is often sufficient to extort the most solemn promises to avoid the occasion of sin; but it is rarely sufficient to convert the man who has accustomed himself to sin, once health is restored. Scarcely is the last drop of medicine swallowed, scarcely has the sufferer left his bed, than he hastens again to the place he so solemnly promised to avoid, he again seeks the society which has been his constant source of sin, he visits the same persons once more whom he promised to avoid. "O Lord, Thou hast struck them and they have not grieved; they have made their faces harder than the rock, and they have refused to return" (Jer. v. 3).

Is this an exaggeration? Unfortunately, it is a daily occurrence. How many a man can testify to the truth of this from his own experience! Tell me, have you not frequently sought the occasion of sin,

have you not formed acquaintances that are reprehensible, and do you not persist in them despite the exhortations you have received both from the pulpit and in the confessional? You have seen the end of all this in others, and yet you persist in your evil ways. How is it with you now; do you still persist in frequenting the company, the places, which have been a source of sin for you in the past? Is it not true that the consideration of heaven or hell has not availed to separate you from the object of your affections? Alas, if this is true of you, listen now to the words of grace, cut off the hand or the foot, pluck out the eye which is a source of scandal to you.

2. They that do not avoid the occasion of sin die in their sins. Habitual sinners generally go on in the way of their sins until they are laid upon their dying-bed; and it is the same with those who love the occasion of sin. Many pursue the same course of sin their whole life through. They leave this life without ever having seriously repented. They have frequently confessed and promised amendment, but were their contrition and their promise sincere? So it will be with their last confession; there will be the same half-hearted promise, not come from a sincere heart, and they will die in their sins. It cannot be denied that some are sincere and make a good confession on their deathbed, and they will be saved; but the danger is that one who has never made a sincere effort in his life to shake off the shackles of sin will also lack sincerity at that hour. A large proportion of deathbed conversions are very unsatisfactory. How

many there are who made what they thought their last confession and when they became well were worse than before! Have we not some reason to doubt the sincerity of such a one's conversion? And what will be the fate of one who dies in his sins? You know only too well what awaits him in the next world.

Occasions of sin are the most profitable snare of the devil; by them "he lifted up all them with his hook, he drew them in his drag, and gathered them into his net." How true this is! Should it not make the sinner tremble and fear the occasion of sin! Perhaps there are some among you who have lived for a long time in the occasion of sin, who have held fast to the meshes of the devil's net, whose confessions lacked in sincerity, whose purpose of amendment was weak. If this be so, fear, for the day of reckoning often comes unexpectedly. It will come sooner than you expect, and: "We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive according as he hath done, whether good or evil" (2 Cor. v. 10). On that great and dreadful day sentence shall be passed upon us which will affect our welfare for all eternity. Make your escape from the devil's net whilst there is yet time. "If thou perceivest an abyss to be near, and art anxious not to fall into it, do not as much as approach it," says St. Alphonsus. It may be a hard matter to leave the occasion of sin, but the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. Make the sacrifice, make it this very day. God's grace will aid you, and you will rejoice: "The snare is broken and we are delivered" (Ps. cxxiii. 7).

21. Shipwreck on Life's Ocean.

"*Thou art destroyed by the sea, thy riches are in the bottom of the waters, and all the multitude, that was in the midst of thee is fallen.*"—Ezech. xxvii. 34.

LIFE is often compared to a voyage upon an ocean, and human beings are the vessels that sail upon it. In the distance there is a shore which all should reach because upon it is the beautiful city of the heavenly Jerusalem, where there is rest and happiness. This city is resplendent with its streets of gold, and its walls built of precious stones, and its gate of the purest pearl; it is adorned like a bride for her spouse (Apoc. xxi. 2). On that shore all must land and be safely harbored for all eternity. Unfortunately many make shipwreck before they reach it, and are swallowed up by the sea. The very mention of shipwreck has a terror about it. What scenes it calls up in the imagination! Who can be indifferent to such a calamity? It will be well to ponder it in time so as to escape its actuality. We shall to-day consider

I. How frequently it occurs;
II. How terrible a calamity it is.

PART I.

1. Many make shipwreck at the commencement of the voyage, i. e., in childhood. The mariner who

pursues his course carelessly when the waves are running high must beware lest he be swallowed up in the billows. Many men hoist the sail in their youthful days and let the ship take its own course. The heart of childhood, we are told, is all mirth, and we speak of giddy youth as a period given up to thoughtlessness and frivolity. How heedlessly children go to places where danger awaits them, where sin lurks to entrap them! How rarely they watch over their senses, what liberty they allow to their eyes and ears! How regardless they are of the warnings of parents and priests! The consequence is that they make shipwreck early in life. "A fool will laugh at sin" (Prov. xiv. 9). Look back upon your own early years. Perhaps you, too, have suffered shipwreck in your childhood. Think of what happened with certain companions, in certain out-of-the-way places. Perhaps your guardian angel had to hide his face for shame on your account.

Many ships are lost soon after launching because they fall into the hands of pirates. In former times traveling was very insecure on account of the great number of pirates that infested the seas, and many a vessel was captured by them. Pirates have become rare upon the high seas, but they are all the more numerous on the sea of life. Who and what are these pirates? They are the corrupters of youth, they are men "who call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness" (Is. v. 20). They are the men who "speak sweetly with their lips, but in their heart lie in wait to throw thee into the

pit" (Ecclus. xii. 15). They are at times unprincipled servants, at others corrupt companions, or again even brothers and sisters. How often, alas, the little boat falls a prey to pirates! Has it not happened perhaps to some of you, that you were robbed of your innocence in your boyhood and taught to do wrong by some bad companion? With bitter sorrow you look back upon that day.

2. Many are lost on the high sea. By this I mean in the prime of life, the age which most of you have attained. Shipwreck at this period of life is by no means rare, for at this stage of life the storms are violent. They come from three different directions. They come from hell; the devil is very anxious to gain possession of the young. He prowls about their path "like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. v. 8). He employs all his wiles, he calls up all his malice in order to entangle young men in his net. Again, the storm comes from the world. The votaries of the world call to the young man: "Come and let us enjoy the good things that are present. Let us speedily use the creatures as in youth; let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let not the flower of the time pass by us" (Wisd. ii. 6, 7). In thousands of ways the world allures young men to sin; its temptations are everywhere. The third direction from which the blast of temptation comes is that of the flesh. It is especially in youth that man's "imagination and thoughts are prone to evil" (Gen. viii. 21). It is especially the young who are "drawn away by their concupiscence and

allured" (James i. 14). The storms arising from our carnal nature are numerous and severe. You yourselves have made this experience, not once, but many times.

It is not to be wondered at that in gales so frequent and so terrific many a bark founders and is sunk. Added to the storms are rocks upon which the vessels are blown. These rocks are the many occasions of sin to which young people are exposed. There is the rock of pride, and "from pride all perdition took its beginning" (Tob. iv. 14). "The beginning of the pride of man was to fall off from God" (Ecclus. x. 14). Young people are in a special danger from this rock. They trust too much in themselves, they think they can do everything, they place absolute confidence in their own judgment, and will not listen to a word of advice. They answer their parents rudely and disregard the words of the priest. The Wise Man speaks of a "generation whose eyes are lofty and their eyelids lifted on high" (Prov. xxx. 13). The second rock is that of intemperance. "Who hath wo? who hath contentions? who falls into pits? who hath wounds without cause? Surely they who pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups" (Prov. xxiii. 29, 30). This is a most dangerous rock for young men. How many are addicted to drink, sit the whole evening in the drinking-saloon, and squander their wages and savings! "The heat of drunkenness is the stumbling-block of the foot, lessening strength and causing wounds" (Ecclus. xxxi. 40). The third rock is impurity. More vessels are wrecked

upon this rock than upon any other; it is a "fire that devoureth even to destruction and rooteth up all things that spring" (Job xxxi. 12). Multitudes of young men approach the fire, nay, they cast themselves into it with eagerness. Shameful thoughts, shameful words, shameful actions; of all these things they are guilty.

How frequently, then, vessels are wrecked upon the sea of life! Who can say: I have escaped unharmed, and have sailed safely past the rocks? "Who is he, and we will praise him? For he hath done wonderful things in his life" (Ecclus. xxxi. 9).

PART II.

1. In this shipwreck all is lost that is valuable. What are the treasures that are lost? In the first place, all the most beautiful gifts of God are lost. The greatest is sanctifying grace, with its wonderful privileges. It is a garment that shines with indescribable beauty, comparable only with the raiment of the angels; it is a garment which makes men worthy to be called the sons of God and to sit down at the celestial banquet of the Most High. It is the wedding-garment spoken of in the Gospel. In this robe the soul is more beautiful than Solomon in all his glory. After the shipwreck which takes place when mortal sin is committed, sanctifying grace is withdrawn, and with its loss all the fairest gifts of God to man are also taken away; it is as if the sun had disappeared from the firmament of heaven. "From the daughter of Sion all her beauty is departed" (Lam. i. 6). In

this shipwreck all our former merits are swept away. These are the merits won by labor, sacrifice, conflicts, and suffering. These merits were intended as pearls in our eternal crown, to shine there forever. By mortal sin all merits for eternal life are lost. "If the just man turn away from his justice and do iniquity, shall he live? all his justice, that he hath done, shall not be remembered" (Ezech. xviii. 24). As a sharp frost cuts off the fairest blossoms of spring, so mortal sin destroys the good works and merits of the Christian. The unhappy sinner will appear before his Judge "poor and naked." By mortal sin the ship and all its cargo are sunk beneath the waves.

2. Only what is worthless is saved. What remains after the shipwreck is often a diseased frame. Sin is frequently highly prejudicial to the physical health. This is particularly so with the sin of intemperance. "In many meats there will be sickness and greediness will turn to choler" (Ecclus. xxxvii. 33). "They that give themselves to drinking shall be consumed" (Prov. xxiii. 21). Still more is the health impaired by certain sins of impurity. The poison of this sin enters the very bones of its victims and consumes them. Many a man goes about with a wasted frame and the seeds of consumption, or is confined to a sick-bed for months by abscesses and ulcers, all on account of giving free reins to his passions and evil desires. Another thing that is saved from spiritual shipwreck is a bruised heart.

Sin, like all iniquity, is like a two-edged sword, "there is no remedy for the wound thereof" (Eccles.

xxi. 4). Indulgence in sin always leaves a sting behind, which effectually prevents real happiness of soul. After David had suffered shipwreck he exclaimed: "My tears are my bread day and night" (Ps. xli. 4). After St. Peter had sinned he wept throughout the remainder of his life. Especially as a man advances in life, he looks back with more bitter regret upon the sins of his youth, and many a tear does he shed for the remembrance of them. And when he is at last summoned to leave this world, when death knocks at the door, then he deplores most bitterly the transgressions of his earlier days, and in the words of the prophet he cries out: "I am afflicted and made sorrowful, and astonishment hath taken hold of me" (Jer. viii. 21).

Thus what is truly valuable is lost in the spiritual shipwreck, and only what is worthless is saved. All the treasures of eternity go to the bottom and nothing remains but tears and remorse, a sickly body and a bruised heart. Shipwreck on the sea of life is frequent, and it is a terrible occurrence. It often takes place at the outset of life's voyage, because many navigate heedlessly or are overtaken by pirates. Often, too, it takes place on the high seas in mid-ocean because of the violence of the tempest and the number of rocks. It is a terrible misfortune because all that is valuable is lost, all the precious gifts of God to man, all the rich merits which man has stored up in his life; besides, only what is worthless is saved, physical infirmity and grief of heart. If you have not yet suffered shipwreck, if you have never been guilty of

mortal sin, give thanks to God from your heart, and steer your course with the utmost caution, commending yourselves to the divine protection, that you may escape the dangers of the deep; be mindful—"He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41). But if you have already made shipwreck, you must weep over your loss, mourn as though you sorrowed over the loss of father or mother. Do your utmost to save from the wreck what can be saved, so that everything be not lost, that soul and body may not both sink into the abyss. Return to God in the spirit of sincere penance, and spare not the effort to avoid a second shipwreck. Cling to the planks that are left for your salvation. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilements of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting sanctification in the spirit" (2 Cor. vii. 1).

22. The Loss of Divine Grace.

"*I put a beautiful crown upon thy head.*"—Ezech. xvi. 12.

THE prophet Ezechiel depicts in a masterly way the beauty of a soul in the state of grace. Amongst the ornaments wherewith it is decked is also a crown. You, too, are partakers in this happiness. In Baptism God out of the abundance of His mercy placed upon your head the crown of sanctifying grace. For this reason St. Peter speaks of the baptized as a "chosen generation," a "royal priesthood." Does this crown still adorn your brow, or have you been robbed of it? Have you perhaps broken it and cast it away in contempt? If you are still in the state of grace, you are still wearing it; but if you have lost the gift of sanctifying grace, then the beautiful crown is gone. This is indeed a reason for sorrow, and that a deep sorrow. I shall speak to-day of the loss of divine grace, considering

I. How great a loss it is;
II. How easily it is sustained.

PART I.

The grace of which we speak is an interior supernatural gift of God, whereby man becomes a child of God and an heir of eternal life. This grace is called sanctifying grace because it makes us just and pleas-

ing before God, it makes us holy. We receive it in Baptism and we lose it by mortal sin. Such a loss is an infinitely great loss, for by it we lose

1. The most precious gift that man can possess. He who loses sanctifying grace loses a treasure of incomparable value, and with it the beauty and loveliness which it gives also vanishes. There is nothing more beautiful than a soul in the state of grace; fair as is the bright light of the sun, the radiance of a soul in grace outshines it. The prophet Ezechiel thus describes the ornaments of the soul in divine grace: "I shod thee with violet shoes, I put bracelets on thy hands and a chain about thy neck, and a beautiful crown upon thy head. And thou wast adorned with gold and silver and wast clothed with fine linen, and embroidered work and many colors. And thy renown went forth among the nations for thy beauty, for thou wast perfect through My beauty, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God" (Ezech. xvi. 10-14). The soul in the state of grace obtains a likeness to God, and as the mirror reflects the brightness of the sun. so the soul reflects the splendor of the Most High. But no sooner is one mortal sin committed than this beauty is at an end, and the soul is disfigured and loses all that it obtained by grace. The soul in the state of grace possesses riches of infinite value; it has a claim on the love of God, the Heart of the Son of God belongs to it. To it belong the merits of the Passion and death of the Redeemer. Hence St. Paul speaks of the "abundant riches of His grace" (Ephes. ii. 7), the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephes. iii.

8), as the portion of the faithful. Every good work performed by the Christian in the state of grace, every thought, every word, every action, adds to the store of this wealth. All these riches are swept away in one moment by mortal sin.

Mortal sin destroys the fairest hopes of the soul. The hope of mankind is the enjoyment of that happiness of which St. Paul tells us: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). The soul in the state of grace has a right to look forward to this happiness as her portion for all eternity; she is an heir to the kingdom of heaven. "If sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint-heirs with Christ, that we may also be glorified with Him" (Rom. viii. 17). The soul adorned with sanctifying grace is born again unto an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that cannot fade away, reserved in heaven" (1 Pet. i. 4). Mortal sin robs the soul of this right to heaven; heaven is closed against her. What an awful loss this is! But this it not all; the man who loses sanctifying grace

2. Incurs the most terrible punishment. He incurs the displeasure of God. God is perfect and eternal sanctity and for this reason abhors sin; sin is a contradiction of the sanctity of God. This is clearly taught in the pages of Holy Scripture: "God, seeing the wickedness of man.... being inwardly touched with sorrow of heart" (Gen. vi. 5). "Thou art not a God that willest iniquity; Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity" (Ps. v. 5, 7). "To God the wicked

and his wickedness are hateful alike" (Wisd. xiv. 9). "They who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 8). What more terrible fate can there be than to be an object of abhorrence to God? What more terrible condition than to be an object of aversion to Him who is to be our happiness?

By mortal sin the sinner merits the chastisements of God. I will speak only of the most terrible of all, eternal damnation. It is an article of our faith that every one who dies in the state of mortal sin is cast into hell for all eternity. Hell, damnation, what terrible words these are! Can any one grasp their meaning! Enumerate all that causes pain and suffering here upon earth: sickness, amputation of limbs, scorching heat, parching thirst, the burning glow of a furnace; all fall short of the meaning of the words hell, damnation. "For He will give fire and worms into their flesh. that they may burn and feel forever" (Jud. xvi. 21). St. Augustine says: "Let it not be imagined that the fire of hell is so slight a thing as the fire that burns upon earth."

With the loss of sanctifying grace man loses all that is most noble, most glorious; and in exchange he receives as his portion the chastisements of God. What other loss, no matter how great, can be compared with the loss of sanctifying grace? Compared with it, the loss of sight, of hearing, of health, of wealth, are as nothing. Even if the greatest monarch were driven from his throne and made to walk the earth as a beggar, his loss could not be compared with the loss the soul sustains when it loses the grace of God.

PART II.

1. Sanctifying grace is easily lost, on account of the many inducements to sin. We dwell in a sinful world. "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life" (1 John ii. 16). How many dangers beset us in this world, how many allurements to sin, how many pitfalls into which one may so easily sink! There are snares in the city and snares in the country, snares with companions and snares in solitude. Especially in our days these snares are multiplied, the enemies of our salvation lose no opportunity to draw us away from the path of virtue.

We live in a sinful body. The Apostle says: "I know that there dwelleth not in my body that which is good" (Rom. vii. 18). Corrupt inclinations are a part of our mortal body, concupiscence is, as it were, in our blood and in the marrow of the bone. It is a fire that cannot be extinguished, a fire that is constantly threatening to flare up in an all-consuming flame. It is a fire that needs constant watching, for if it once spreads it carries destruction and ruin in its trail.

Further, we are continually persecuted by the spirit of evil, "who goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. v. 8). It is Satan, who fell away from God and never ceases trying to persuade others to imitate his rebellion. We must be on our guard against the "fiery darts of the most wicked one" (Ephes. vi. 16). St. Augustine tells us that the devils are burning with desire to destroy the

creatures of God. The enemy of mankind never sleeps, in all our ways he lies in wait for us; he avails himself of every opportunity to make us fall into sin.

2. With all the dangers that surround us, there is another factor to be considered,—our own half-heartedness in the fight against evil. Courage, energy, perseverance, are required to conquer in the strife that awaits us in order to overcome the threefold enemy of our salvation. No peace or armistice is possible with these enemies; we must fight on courageously to the end. To do this we must gather all our strength; we must sit down and think whether we are able with ten thousand to meet him that with twenty thousand cometh against us (Luke xiv. 31). Unhappily many do not think of preparing for the warfare; they neglect to obtain the necessary weapons, the weapons which faith places in our hands, and with which we are rendered invincible. The best of these is prayer and the Bread of Life, holy communion. He who is instant in prayer and who frequently approaches the table of the Lord puts on the armor of God, which enables him to resist the enemy and come out victorious from the battle. By means of prayer we can do all things. Holy communion is called the "Bread of the strong"; it suppresses the law of sin in our members, quells the tumult of the passions, and heals the spiritual wounds inflicted by the enemy. But, alas, how little heed is paid by some to the weapons of faith! How is it with you in the matter of prayer? Must not many acknowledge neglect in this essential? Some do not even say a short "Our Father" or "Hail

Mary" in the morning; many go to bed at night without one thought of gratitude to God for the benefits received during the day. When they attend Mass on Sunday, their thoughts are somewhere else; the rosary is never or but seldom seen in their hands. What is your conduct in regard to the reception of the sacraments? Are there not a great number of young men for whom the thought of confession and holy communion is an unwelcome one? How many there are among Catholics who go but once or twice to the sacraments! How can a soldier fight a successful battle without weapons? How can he expect to conquer without the armor of God?

It is not sufficient to put on the armor—we must also fight. The Apostle says: "Resist ye, strong in the faith" (1 Pet. v. 9). Alas, many a spiritual warrior makes little resistance; or if he resists at the outset, he soon listens to the allurements of the enemy, the world, the flesh, and the devil, and allows himself to be conquered. Once he begins to listen to the arguments of the enemy, he is easily persuaded to throw down his arms and turn traitor. After going to confession you resisted for a while, a few days or even a few weeks, but then you lost heart, you gave ear to the enemy, and soon you were again a captive of Satan. Has not this been your case repeatedly?

The loss of grace, as we have seen, is not a rare occurrence, because of the many enticements to sin, as also because of our own lack of courage. It is a loss far greater than any worldly loss that we may sustain. Through the loss of grace man becomes miserable,

"poor and naked"; the heir of heaven is changed into one whose portion is damnation; the child of God becomes an object of His loathing. "The Lord hath cast off His altar, He hath cursed His sanctuary; He hath delivered the walls of the towers thereof into the hands of the enemy" (Lam. ii. 7).

Christian young men, I appeal to you: upon what will you resolve? Will you allow the most precious gift of God to slip from your fingers? You would think twice before you would throw away a coin, and behold here a treasure more valuable than all the coin of the country! Or perhaps you have already cast this treasure aside, mortal sin has already made its entrance into your heart; if so, grieve over the loss and seek to regain the treasure lost. It is impossible to regain baptismal innocence, but you may regain the friendship of God. If you do penance, if you go to confession, God will restore you to His grace; He will once more number you among His children. Do this as soon as possible; and profiting by your experience, be courageous and fight the good fight to the end.

23. Consequences of Sins Committed in Youth.

"*In the morning thy seed shall flourish; the harvest is taken away in the day of inheritance, and shall grieve thee much.*"—Is. xvii. 11.

THE seed which flourishes in the morning is the instructions and wise counsels received in childhood from parents and priests. It also signifies the grace which God in His mercy pours into the heart of the child. This seed springs up and produces beautiful leaves and blossoms. How many boys by their good conduct give promise to their parents and superiors of the brightest future! However, when childhood is over they say: "I will go and abound with delights and enjoy good things" (Eccles. ii. 1). "Come and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth" (Wisd. ii. 6). They do so, and the fair blossoms drop off, dried and withered; the harvest is taken away in the day of inheritance. Instead of choice fruits, nothing but thorns and barren limbs is found upon the tree. And this shall grieve you much. The consequences of sins in early life are bitter both

I. In time;

II. In eternity.

PART I.

"He that soweth iniquity shall reap evils. and with the rod of God's anger he shall be consumed" (Prov. xxii. 8). Even in this life the results of a dissipated youth are extremely sad; such a youth ruins the happiness of a whole lifetime. A young man's earthly welfare depends principally upon three things: health of body, a good name, and a contented mind. These three pillars of worldly happiness are almost invariably overturned by dissipation in youth.

Health is ruined. Better a poor man who is sound and strong of constitution than a rich man who is weak and afflicted with evils. "There is no riches above the riches of the health of the body" (Ecclus. xxx. 14, 16). Youthful sins are the poison that eats out the marrow of the bone and saps the vital energy of the man. "He that giveth himself to harlots will be wicked; rottenness and worms shall inherit him" (Ecclus. xix. 3). "Impurity of life," says St. Louis of Grenada, "enervates and weakens a man and undermines his health." Again, how very injurious intemperance is! "In many meats there will be sickness" (Ecclus. xxxvii. 33). "They that give themselves to drinking shall be consumed" (Prov. xxiii. 21). "The sea does not so much mischief when it overflows its boundaries, the hurricane is less dangerous when it sweeps over the city, than intemperance which ruins the body" (St. Chrysostom). How often it happens that young men are seen to droop like flowers blighted by the frost! They gradually become mere shadows, and do not enjoy health for a single hour of their

lives. Many others with stronger and more robust constitutions are able to bear up longer, but all the more surely the results of dissipation will make themselves felt in later years.

Reputation is lost. "A good name is better than precious ointment" (Eccles. vii. 2). "Take care of a good name, for this shall continue with thee more than a thousand treasures precious and great" (Ecclus. xli. 15). A life of license inevitably smirches one's good name. Who will have regard for a young man who is frequently seen in saloons, who makes use of offensive language, who is repeatedly seen in bad company, who has ruined the virtue or good name of another? No one has a good word to say for him, all despise him. "As snow in summer and rain in harvest, so glory is not for the fool" (Prov. xxvi. 1).

Peace of mind is lost. "A secure mind is like a continual feast" (Prov. xv. 15). Dissipation destroys the tranquillity of the soul. One who is conscious of grave transgressions of the law of God cannot look up to heaven with a cheerful countenance. "There is no peace in my bones because of my sins" (Ps. xxxvii. 4). Can this be said to be an exaggeration? Have not perhaps some of you made this experience? As long as you did not forsake God and His law you were always happy and cheerful; every flower in your path, every bird in the air, was a source of joy to you. But once you fell into grievous sin, once your passions got the mastery over you, you became fretful and out of temper, and no one could please you. At night, when sleep is slow in coming, dark and

gloomy thoughts come over you and fill you with fear.

The sins of youth cause great unhappiness. Painful are the things which the sinner must endure. His life is embittered, his conscience reproaches him, and he is haunted by apprehension. "The sound of dread is always in his ears; tribulation shall terrify him, and distress shall surround him, as a king that is prepared for battle" (Job xv. 21, 24). A two-edged sword pierces his soul. A guilty conscience blames the past, complains of the present, trembles at the future. To this still another misery is added. A dissipated young man loses the confidence of his employers; he cannot rise, and in time of want is the first to be discharged from his employment. Hence such a one not unfrequently comes to a sad state of destitution. Holy Scripture draws the picture of such a youth for us in the parable of the lost son. He squandered all his substance living riotously, and finally was perishing with hunger. Those that indulge in excesses are often led to commit crimes that bring them within reach of the arm of the law. If inquiry were made into the prisons of our country, it would be found that a great number of our criminals are men who like you had the advantages of a good Catholic home, a Christian education, and were led to their present condition by youthful folly and dissipation. A dissolute and vicious life shortens a man's days. It eats up the physical strength like a gnawing worm, and brings the young libertine to an early grave. "Before the days be full the wicked man shall perish. He shall

be blasted as a vine when its grapes are in the first flower, and as an olive-tree that casteth its flower" (Job xv. 32, 33). "The years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Prov. x. 27). How often it comes to pass that those who are addicted to drink and immorality become prematurely old or are cut off by death before they have reached the years of manhood! Everywhere, even in the most secluded villages, we find examples of this.

Evil awaits the sinner in the hour of death. Then it is that the pangs of conscience are felt most acutely. The excesses of youth are a heavy burden upon the soul about to take its flight from the body, and render death a thousand times more terrible. Many a one has cause to exclaim: "Woe is me, I am confounded and ashamed, because I have borne the reproach of my youth" (Jer. xxxi. 19). The priest called to administer the sacraments and to give consolation to the dying man is often at a loss what to say to such a one in order to assuage the tortures of the despairing heart.

PART II.

1. The consequences of the sins of youth extend beyond the grave. What an awakening for such a one in eternity! It will be one of dreadful anxiety. Here below, "We see through a glass in a dark manner, now we know in part" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). Men who are given to mortal sin, so that sin has as it were become a second nature to them, are often blind, utterly unable to see the light. "They are in dark places as dead men" (Is. lix. 10). When they enter

eternity the clouds are dispelled and the light breaks in on them. What an awakening it will be for him who has disgraced his youthful years by leading a disorderly life, by heaping secret sins up in his heart! Even if he has done penance, there will be an anxiety in his heart when he has to appear before his Judge to give an account of his whole life. He who has not fallen into mortal sin can look forward to the judgment with cheerfulness; not so one who has spent his early days in sin, even if he has repented. Fear and trembling will lay hold of him when he stands before the King of kings, his Master and Lord, to render an account of his service. The awakening will have in it an element of despair, causing misery beyond description, if he has departed this life without repentance. Then for the first time he will realize the horror of the situation; he will then see the wretched condition of his unhappy soul; he will then for the first time understand the words: "The highest hateth sinners and will repay vengeance to the ungodly" (Ecclus. xii. 7). In the character of the unrepentant sinner he must appear before the God of holiness. What a sensation for the sinner! He sees that for him there is no pardon, no mercy, no salvation; for him there is but misery and suffering and eternal damnation. He can then exclaim: "He hath destroyed me on every side and I am lost, and He taketh away my hope as from a tree that is plucked up" (Job xix. 10).

2. How terrible is the punishment which is meted out to the sinner for all eternity! "Now very shortly,"

says the Lord through the prophet, "I will pour out My wrath upon thee, and I will accomplish My anger in thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways. My eye shall not spare: and you shall know that I am the Lord that strike" (Ezech. vii. 8, 9). Even when a man has confessed his sins and changed his ways, there is still a long purgatory in store for the one who has wasted his youth in the service of the flesh and the world. He will have to suffer according to the greater or less extent of his misdeeds, according to the greater or less amount of penance he has performed here upon earth after his conversion. He shall be saved, "yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. iii. 15). The fire of purgatory, though not eternal, is yet extremely painful. How long many a soul will remain there, stretching up her hands in supplication, waiting to be delivered from that awful dungeon!

Many a one will be punished for all eternity in hell for the sins of his youth. Eternal perdition is the doom of the unrepentant sinner; and many a one has become such by stifling conscience in his youth. "Unless you shall do penance you shall all perish," the Sacred Scripture calls to the sinner (Luke xiii. 3). And St. Paul: "According to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgments of God" (Rom. ii. 5). How many a man enters upon eternity without penance or repentance for the sins of his early days! He does not realize the entire extent of his misery until he hears the words of the Judge: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into ever-

lasting fire" (Matt. xxv. 41). Then the truth of many an exhortation, many a sermon that he paid no heed to, will flash upon his mind; he will think of those awful words, "Where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth"; he will remember hearing of the "pool burning with fire and brimstone"; and all the words will have a new, a terrible, meaning to him.

Happy indeed are you, Christian young men, if you have not given your heart to licentiousness. You know what terrible consequences follow upon the vices of youth. Renew your resolutions to-day never to depart from God and His holy law, never to enter upon the path of iniquity. Flee youthful lusts; watch and pray that you enter not into temptation; "take heed, lest being led aside by the error of the unwise, you fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Pet. iii. 17). If, on the contrary, you have already strayed from the way of holiness and have entered upon the way of vice, you are indeed to be pitied. You have taken the chalice of wickedness and you have drunk of its poison. The effects of the poison will cause you intense suffering either here or in eternity. Return and call upon God: "The sins of my youth, do not remember, O Lord" (Is. xxiv. 7). Make your peace with Heaven; turn with disgust from those shameful sins of impurity, of intemperance, and the other excesses to which young men are prone.

24. The Evil of Keeping Late Hours.

"*Men loved darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil.*"—John iii. 19.

In the gospel of St. John we read these words: "Men loved darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil. Every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved." These words were spoken by Our Lord, and, coming from His divine lips, I will use them as the text of my instruction to-day. I would ask and entreat you to avoid darkness. We will use the word darkness in a more literal sense than Our Lord did, and speak of the evil of wandering about at night. I shall try to give you reasons why this practice is most injurious to you, and shall try to induce you to avoid being out late at night, and at the same time shall indicate the advantages to be derived from the good habit of retiring early. We shall consider

I. The reasons against nocturnal wanderings;
II. The advantages of good habits in this respect.

PART I.

1. Dangers attending habits of being out late. One that stays out until late endangers his good name.

What sort of persons do you generally find out late at night? Thieves, libertines, evil-doers. "Every one that doth evil hateth the light, that his works may not be reproved." Is it very creditable to a young man to haunt the streets at a time when such persons are astir? Certainly not; it is, on the contrary, a disgrace to be found in such company. Besides, being out late at night brings a young man into all sorts of dangerous temptations to sin. Young men who keep late hours often get mixed up in brawls and disreputable doings; and the inevitable result is the loss of reputation.

Health is endangered. Exposure to the night air and a consequent loss of necessary sleep are by all medical men considered injurious to health. Persons out late meet with drunken men and often get into a quarrel, they are sometimes roughly handled, and even seriously injured. But the principal danger is to the virtue of the young man who makes a practice of being out late at night. His associates are generally men of dissolute habits who know nothing of the fear of God, and to whom uprightness of character is a term without meaning. Their lips overflow with boasting, their conversation is vulgar and low, their jokes are coarse and improper. "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent, the venom of asps is under their lips" (Ps. cxxxix. 4). "The mouth of the fool bubbleth out folly" (Prov. xv. 2). What can be learned from such companions? Their example is bad, and, unfortunately, influences many a Christian young man for evil. In what ways does he walk who

roams about at night? He walks in ways where the angel of light does not guide him, but where the spirits of hell spread their snares to entrap him, in ways of darkness and amid occasions of sin. Can such a one fail to tarnish the virtues of purity and temperance? How many a young man has lost his innocence on account of the evil habit of roaming about at night!

2. It is further an immoral habit, because it is against the order which God has established. God appointed the night for rest. No sooner has the sun set than a delightful quiet comes over nature; the birds repair to their nests, the flowers close their calyces and droop, man who has labored all day feels the need of rest. The young man who prepares to go out at this time separates himself from the order of nature. He who has worked during the day is entitled to rest during the night. But the principal objection to wandering about at night from a moral standpoint is that it gives occasions to sins which the young man would be ashamed to commit in the daytime. Young men go about from place to place drinking and carousing; they frequent places of doubtful character, are found in company in which they should be ashamed to be seen. Much that is profane and infamous goes under the mantle of darkness. Language is heard that should bring the blush of shame to the cheeks of the Christian youth. They do not stop at words, they proceed to deeds, "rioting, chambering, and impurities," of which the Apostle speaks (Rom. xiii. 14). Many spend the evenings

and nights keeping company with women. Honorable as this may be at its proper time,—the night is not the time for it. The darkness lends courage to say and do things that cannot bear the light of day; the passions are aroused by the very circumstances of time and place. Many a young man has committed sins for which he sorrowed the rest of his life that he would not have committed had he avoided the darkness of night. It is evident to every one that a young man sitting for hours with a young woman in the dark is not speaking of spiritual things—they are not praying together.

Have I not abundant reason, Christian young men, to warn you against being out late at night? By this evil habit you risk your most precious possessions and run into manifold dangers. "My son, if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them. If they shall say, Come with us, cast in thy lot with us, walk not thou with them, refrain thy feet from their paths, for their feet run to evil" (Prov. i. 10-16). "Let us cast off the works of darkness" (Rom. xiii. 12). "You are the children of the light and the children of the day" (1 Thess. v. 5).

PART II.

1. By regular habits you are safeguarded against many evils. You are guarded against the evil of sin. "To God the wicked and his wickedness are alike hateful" (Wisd. xiv. 9) "He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning" (1 John iii. 8). Sin is the death

of the soul. Sin is not merely an evil like other evils —it is the greatest of evils; it is an outrage against God, a rejection of His holy law. Theologians tell us that sin is so great an evil that it were better that a thousand worlds were destroyed than that one single sin be committed; so great an evil that it behooves heaven and earth, angels and men to mourn and sorrow for it incessantly. If you avoid wandering about at night you will escape a thousand perils and dangers conducive to sin.

Another evil which you escape is the reproach of a guilty conscience. The sense of guilt is the consequence of sin. All iniquity is like a two-edged sword, "there is no remedy for the wound thereof" (Ecclus. xxi. 4). After a night spent in revelry a keen disquietude takes hold of the heart. Evil deeds have been perpetrated which have left a sting behind them for the remainder of the young man's life, and are a source of grief in later years. They will be a source of terror when he lies on his deathbed. You can spare yourself this remorse if you never fall into the habit of wandering about at night.

A third evil which you escape by avoiding this habit is disgrace. Those who roam about at night lose the esteem of their fellow men. Who can have any respect for a man, or give him his confidence, if he is known as a night-hawk, if he wanders about at night under the cover of the dark like a thief, if he disturbs the regularity of the household? Besides, those that go about at night often do things of which the police have to take cognizance. To be disgraced in this way

is certainly very prejudicial to one's good name. Staying at home at night will safeguard you against the vices of intemperance and impurity.

2. By avoiding this evil you are enriched with many blessings. One of these is health of the body. He who spends the hours of the night in sleep rises in the morning refreshed from the fatigue of the previous day; he renews his strength for the coming day; sleep is better than medicines and drugs. Thus health is fostered and preserved, surely no small blessing. A sound body is better than riches. "There is no riches above the riches of the health of the body" (Ecclus. xxx. 15, 16). Another blessing is a good name. A young man who, instead of joining the crowd of nocturnal revelers, is content to remain quietly at home is loved by his parents and respected by all right-minded people. Such esteem is well worth having. "A good name is better than great riches" (Prov. xxii. 1). A third blessing is the grace of God. God draws near to him who does not run after the pleasures of the world and loves a retired, regular life; He bestows upon him His choicest blessings. The prophet speaks in the name of God to the soul that loves solitude: "Behold I will allure her, and lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart" (Osee ii. 14). God speaks to them that do not give their ear to the allurements of worldly pleasures. This is indeed a blessing well worth our striving after. Those that shun the darkness will receive the "perfect gift from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James i. 17).

How immeasurably great are the advantages to be gained by not roaming about at night! You are kept from many temptations and sins, and you are enriched with great blessings. I exhort you to follow my counsel and to lay your resolutions upon the altar of God. Yet it may be argued that other young men are about at night. But you must not follow the evil example of others if you wish to preserve yourself from sin. He who loves the world will perish with it. Or do you imagine that the excuse that others did the same will avail you on the Day of Judgment? Far from it. Perhaps you will say that your companions will laugh at you if you stay at home at night. Are you not ashamed to put forward such a pretext? It is the excuse of the coward; never use it. Your Christianity must indeed be weak if you are to be governed by the opinions of evil companions. Our Lord will not allow us to be ashamed of obeying Him; "He that shall deny Me before men, I also will deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. x. 33). Some may say that it is too dull and wearisome to be at home of an evening. I do not ask that you remain in the house all evening; all that I ask is that you keep reasonable hours, that you do not stay out until late in the night. Besides, there are many ways in which you can amuse yourself at home a few evenings in the week; a little reading of good books would be of the greatest benefit to you. If you go out of an evening, have a definite purpose in view, know where you are going, and do not loiter about the streets waiting for some temptation to do wrong

to turn up; let the place and the company that you seek be above suspicion. Make a beginning this very day, and be on your guard as regards your whereabouts after dark. Do not despise my counsels; they are of greater importance than they may seem to you now. Many a young man would have preserved his health, good name, and the grace of God had he been on his guard to avoid the dangers of being out until midnight and perhaps later. Remember the night is the time the devil selects for tempting those who resist him in the daytime.

25. Company-keeping.

"*The woman catcheth the precious soul of a man.*"—Prov. vi. 26.

YOUNG people of opposite sexes fall in love with each other, get engaged to be married, and not unfrequently remain in that state for a very long time, sometimes for years. Over this state of things heaven has reason to mourn and hell to rejoice. How so, you may ask, is there anything wrong in keeping company with a person that you intend to marry? I answer that in itself there is nothing wrong in keeping company, but that the time and other attendant circumstances very frequently convert it into a proximate occasion of sin, and that it can become very wrong. I intend to explain this matter to you more fully in to-day's instruction; and as it is a matter upon which you need advice perhaps more than on any other, I ask you to follow my discourse attentively. Love-affairs are frequently very lightly entered into; but they are often attended by

I. Great dangers;

II. Sad consequences.

PART I.

That two persons who intend to get married should previously become better acquainted with each other is reasonable and right; in fact, ordinary prudence and

the future happiness of the two demand as much. If they meet at times, provided they do not remain alone too much and especially at night, and then enter the married state in a proper and legitimate manner, such acquaintance cannot be found fault with. But in many cases there is no prospect, or only a very remote one, that marriage will follow; at times there is not the slightest intention of marriage between the two that keep company. Or, when there *is* an engagement of marriage, they are constantly together; they are averse to the presence of other persons; they prefer to sit for hours in the dark; they wander about in secluded and out-of-the-way places; they are at every dance that is held for miles around. The Christian code of morals can never sanction such company-keeping. Such a method of courtship is fraught with the greatest dangers and generally constitutes a proximate occasion of sin.

Holy Scripture condemns this. "Can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn? Or can he walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" (Prov. vi. 27.) Holy Scripture warns us against the danger of intimacy with women. "Mind not the deceit of a woman, for her lips are like a honey-comb dropping, and her throat is smoother than oil; but her end is bitter as wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down unto death and her steps go in as far as hell" (Prov. v. 2-5). "Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not about upon another's beauty. For many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and hereby lust is en-

kindled as a fire" (Ecclus. ix. 8, 9). All these passages assert the dangerousness of familiarity with persons of the opposite sex. In the Book of Proverbs the danger is portrayed in vivid colors: "I looked out of the window of my house through the lattice, and I see little ones; I behold a foolish young man, who passeth through the street. And behold a woman meeteth him, prepared to deceive souls, talkative and wandering. Catching the young man, with an impudent face flattereth. Immediately he followeth her as an ox to be a victim, and as a lamb playing the wanton, and not knowing that he is drawn like a fool to the bonds" (Prov. vii. 6-22).

The same is taught us by the Doctors of the Church. St. Jerome calls illicit acquaintances the "death-agony of a moribund chastity"; he compares them to a tree bearing the fruit of vice, to a deadly bite of a serpent. "Are you," asks St. Augustine, "more masters of yourselves than David, or wiser than Solomon? Now, if too familiar intercourse with women, and the seduction of their caresses were the ruin of these great men, how will it fare with those who purposely seek such familiarity with the opposite sex, who perhaps live in the same house with them and frequent every amusement in their company?" St. Gregory speaks thus: "Consider what must result from undue intimacy. Doubtless you will admire the good looks of the one whose beauty has captivated you. Looks of love will be exchanged, your eyes will meet. These amorous glances will elicit an encouraging smile in response, you will begin to converse together, and

your conversations will awaken the dormant flame of love. Gradually all reserve will be laid aside and give place to the freedom of unseemly familiarity, of wanton mirth,—and then—no, my tongue, hold your peace, do not run on too fast and disclose what comes next." Even that mildest of moralists, St. Francis de Sales, points out the great dangers of undue familiarity: "In all that young people say and do to one another, actuated by a silly desire to please, no word or deed is free from an element of fascination that chains the heart and excites the senses, because all that passes between them in friendship of this nature leads to something further. It is the first link of a chain which, attracted by magnetic influence, draws the other links after it." Again he says: "These erotic friendships evoke so many temptations, dissipations, and jealous feelings, not to speak of other things inimical to the peace of the soul, that the better feelings of the heart are completely crushed and destroyed by them." St. Alphonsus, the prince of moral theologians, says: "I maintain as a general principle, that it is a matter of great difficulty for any one who keeps up an intimacy of this kind to preserve himself from proximate occasion of sin."

The same conclusion becomes evident if we consider the frailty of human nature. We know that the heart of man is prone to sin. Through the fall of our first parents a great misfortune came upon them and their posterity. Man has become exceedingly weak; the door of the heart is always open to evil. St. Paul testifies to this: "I know that there dwelleth not in

me, that is, in my flesh, that which is good. I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members" (Rom. vii. 18, 23). The human heart is especially prone to the sin of impurity. A single look, a single grasp of the hand, is sufficient to awaken the fire of passion. Witness the case of David (2 Kings xi. 2 seqq.).

Ask yourselves now whether there is anything wrong in these familiar associations with persons of the opposite sex. They are dangerous in the highest degree. Two young persons by nature most frail meet frequently in the twilight or the dark, in solitary places; the passions are enkindled, flames are unchecked; and you ask is there any danger! If the hermits of the desert with all their prayers and austerities, with their diet of roots and vegetables, could subdue nature only by hard struggles, what is not to be feared when it is a question of two lovers, who perhaps seldom pray and practise little if any self-denial? They will not stop short of the greatest sins if they continue their illicit company-keeping.

PART II.

1. The ordinary consequence of dangerous familiarity is a multitude of sins. The river of iniquity that flows from them is not a single stream, but forms many most destructive currents. In the first place we must mention impurity. Indulgence in love-affairs, carried on without safeguards, results almost in-

evitably in violations of chastity. He who puts his hand into the fire is burnt; he who scrambles over a thorny hedge tears his clothes; he who casts himself into the mire will be soiled; and he who keeps up an undue intimacy with a woman will fall into grievous sins. Experience proves only too well the truth of this statement. If such a one does not go astray at first, he will fall into sin all the surer as time goes on. At the outset they will indulge in silly conversations, then love becomes a passion and the understanding is darkened; and when passion obtains a firm foothold the will forms a thousand evil desires; sinful words and unchaste deeds not unfrequently follow.

Another evil is the grief which is caused to parents. How much grief, how much sorrow, parents endure on account of the misdeeds of their children! Their sons and daughters do not obey them, they scorn their advice and admonitions. The parents foresee only too clearly the end of the dangerous entanglements which their children have gotten into, and they mourn over them in bitterness of soul. Often these associations lead to theft. The young man goes into excessive expenses to make presents to his "company," he wants to dress above his means, to take his "company" to dances and amusements; his income is not sufficient and the deficiency must be supplied from his father's coffers. These intimacies lead to scandal. The young couple live on a footing of intimacy, they are seen together almost daily, and yet months and years go by without marriage. People suspect easily that

things are not right, and in many cases there is good reason for the suspicion.

Another evil that follows is frequently a desecration of the sacraments. Full and open confessions of guilt are frequently not made; a feeling of shame keeps the couple from declaring their sins as they should. Such confessions are sacrilegious and so also is the communion which follows. Or, if they confess their sins, they are not willing to remove the proximate occasion of sin; they go from one confessor to another; they leave his admonition unheeded, give a half-hearted promise to avoid the occasion, without a firm will to do so. The absolution is nothing but empty words that can never remit sin. Thus the sacraments are profaned for years, and the mysteries of the faith are abused in the most shameful manner.

2. Intimacies of this kind cause many tears. Sins are always a source of sorrow, but this is especially true of sins of impurity. They bring with them evils not only in the matter of eternal salvation, but even in a temporal way. Disgrace often falls upon those persons guilty of such sins. As the man grows older, he looks back with deep regret at the years spent in contempt of the law of God. On his death-bed they become a source of anguish and fear. The sins committed during a long period of illicit company-keeping rise up before him and fill him with such terror that cold sweat moistens his forehead. Tears flow beyond the grave; they are shed in purgatory, if not in hell. Tears are shed there for years until the punishment that still remains due to the sins is exhausted. Not

unfrequently such young men die suddenly, and have no time for repentance; they have filled the measure of iniquity, and are called to give an account of their doings. Others become hardened in vice and never repent. They are plunged into the abyss, and mourn their sins for all eternity.

These dangerous intimacies bring on consequences bitter as the sting of a serpent; they are attended by great dangers and sad consequences. I have not overdrawn the picture; I have spoken nothing but the truth. Make no excuses to palliate the danger of which I have spoken to-day. Experience shows that the reality is, if anything, worse than I have pictured it. I made the proper allowance. There is no fault to be found with company-keeping within certain limits. Where there is an earnest intention of marriage, and the engagement is not of too long duration, and the visits are made to the family, proper hours are kept, there can be no objection. What I condemn, and what every Christian must condemn, are the courtships without reference to marriage, the intimacies protracted for years, the visits where the young people are together for hours and alone. These are nothing but proximate occasions for sin and often a living in habitual sin. For persons living so there can be no hope of absolution in the confessional which is valid before God unless they abandon the occasion. If you are carrying on an acquaintance of this kind, I beg of you, if you love God, if you love the salvation of your own soul, break it off at once. Do not answer that you have done nothing wrong as yet; if you con-

tinue, you cannot remain free from sin. Cut off the hand that scandalizes you, pluck out the eye that is a source of sin and cast it from thee. Make a generous resolution now, and God will sustain you with His grace. If you do, you will always bless the day on which you conquered yourself.

26. The Evil of Drunkenness.

"Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with drunkenness."—Luke xxi. 34.

ALMIGHTY God has made provision of food and drink sufficient to ensure the preservation of life and health. Nevertheless, it often happens that the gifts which God puts at the disposal of man are employed in such a manner as to prove not profitable, but rather harmful to us; they are misused by being employed to excess. Thus it is especially with spirituous drinks, the excessive use of which proves injurious for time and eternity. As a rule it is men rather than women who are given to excess in this matter. I consider it my duty to warn you against this evil. There may be some amongst you that need that warning very much whilst it is still time, for when the evil has gone too far advice and warning come too late. I will speak to you to-day on the evil of intemperance; and will therefore consider

I. Its beginning;
II. Its progress;
III. Its end.

PART I.

1. Drunkenness begins with an inborn tendency to evil, due to the sin of our first parents. "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil

from youth" (Gen. viii. 21). "I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is, in my flesh, that which is good" (Rom. vii. 18). This propensity to evil is developed in various ways; it is an accursed root from which many poisonous plants grow. One man develops it in the form of anger, another in that of luxury, another in that of avarice, another in that of envy, and still another in that of love for strong drinks. Often the unfortunate tendency manifests itself at an early age, even in childhood. We meet with children that have not yet left school in whom the desire for drink is already developed. The proneness to evil is not a sin in itself, yet it leads to sin if it is left go unchecked. If not resisted with determination it grows rapidly, as a fire spreads if the spark is not stamped out.

2. The desire for strong drink is developed by frequent indulgence; drink as a habit is an acquired habit. The desire is often contracted through the fault of parents. Many parents are so unwise as to give strong drink to their children, some are foolish to applaud their children if they can drink off a glass like a grown person. It may also be the fault of strangers. There are people so ignorant or malicious as to ply children with strong drinks; they take delight in getting them intoxicated and amusing themselves with their antics. As for adults, their danger very often lies in the company they keep. How often it happens that a friend, so called, teaches another the love for strong drink! Young men often boast of how much they can stand, and by means of ridicule

induce their friends to drink more than is good for them.

It may also be through one's own fault that the habit of taking strong drink is acquired. A man may begin by drinking moderately, but on account of the love he has for the associations he meets with in drinking-places, he frequents them more and more and so gradually acquires a love for liquor. He may indeed resist the passion for drink, but unfortunately the number of those who once acquire the habit and resist with any determination is very small. The craving for drink once acquired will not rest without being satisfied. Once the habit is formed it becomes an iron chain, a strong yoke; the man becomes a slave to it and cannot break the fetters that bind him. He says: "Come, let us take wine and be filled with drunkenness, and it shall be as to-day so also to-morrow and much more" (Is. lvi. 12). He cannot get rid of the craving; "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you also may do well, when you have learned evil" (Jer. xiii. 23). An habitual drunkard is incorrigible; nothing avails—neither exhortation nor entreaties. He is not moved by calamity nor sickness nor danger of death. If he were placed before the gates of hell and made to look upon the scorching flames, he would not change his manner of life, he would seek to forget the sight by indulging all the more in his bottle.

This is the way in which drunkenness begins—there is an inclination to evil from nature and the habit is developed by indulgence. A man does not

become a drunkard all at once—it is a gradual growth. The descent is made by degrees; from month to month, from year to year, it is fixed more firmly until the lowest round of the ladder is reached

PART II.

1. The drunkard's course is a life of sin. Intemperance is one of the capital sins, that is, it is a source from which many sins spring. St. Augustine calls it the "parent of all transgressions and the epitome of guilt," the "starting-point of crime and the source of vices." A man given to drink violates his most sacred obligations. Such a one does not sanctify the Sunday. The saloon is his temple and place of worship; it is his home, where he spends most of the day and, if the day is not long enough for him, the greater part of the night. As for hearing the word of God, such an idea does not enter his head. A man given to drink cuts himself off from his family; if he is unmarried, his father and mother, brothers and sisters, give him little concern. If he is married, his wife and children are less dear to him than the enjoyment of strong drink; he is their torment and disgrace.

A man addicted excessively to drink does not shrink from misdeeds and crimes. "Wine is a luxurious thing, and drunkenness riotous" (Prov. xx. 1). "Wine drunken with excess raiseth quarrels and wrath and many ruins" (Ecclus. xxxi. 38). All the Doctors of the Church agree in saying that there is a close connection between drink and luxury. A man who is a drunkard cannot be a pure man. How many sins of

this kind are committed on account of drunkenness! Drink makes men quarrel, blaspheme, and commit deeds of violence. A man given to drink can indeed say: "My misdeeds are gone over my head, and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me. My bones are putrified and corrupted because of my foolishness" (Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6).

2. Such a man's life is a life of misery It is true the drunkard seems jolly and happy, ready to make friends with all the world, yet the truth is that he leads a wretched existence, for he loses much that constitutes happiness in this life and in the next. He loses his good name. No one feels any respect for him. He is despised by his neighbors and even by his own relatives. "He is filled with shame instead of glory" (Hab. ii. 16). He loses his property: "A workman that is a drunkard shall not be rich" (Ecclus. xix. 1). All his possessions go to the saloon and at the end of a short time he is a beggar. He loses his position and the means of earning a living. Thus it often happens that a man who started out in life with the brightest prospects, with a fine home and funds at his disposal, becomes a pauper in his old age and ends his days in the poorhouse, if not in a worse place.

A man given to drink brings on himself much that embitters life. He lays himself open to the most bitter reproaches. His own conscience gives him no rest, but torments him continually. "Tribulation shall terrify him, and distress shall surround him, as a king that is prepared for the battle. The sound of

dread is always in his ears" (Job xv. 21, 24). There are the reproaches of his relatives who rebuke him daily. How much he has to hear that is calculated to wound his self-love and self-respect! He has bodily ailments to endure. "If thou hast overstepped the limits of moderation in drink," says St. Basil, "the next day thy head will be heavy and dull, thou wilt yawn continually and feel giddy." "Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups" (Prov. xxiii. 29, 30). The man who gets drunk repeatedly will have to pay a heavy penalty for his indulgence, he will undermine his health and be subject to much sickness and, not unfrequently, to unforeseen death.

PART III.

1. The end of the drunkard is in many cases an unhappy death. Death often overtakes him suddenly. There is no other vice that so frequently brings on an unexpected death as the evil of drunkenness. Some are frozen to death whilst they are intoxicated, others fall into the water and drown, others are killed in a brawl or by accident. If you examine the statistics of accidental deaths you will find that a very great number of those that were killed were drunkards. Such a death is a terrible misfortune; it makes one shudder to think of being called away from this life in the state of sin, unprepared, incapable even of making an act of contrition or of raising one's thoughts to God. Such a one dies impenitent. If

they do not die whilst intoxicated, their death still has many terrors for them. It may be that when laid upon their dying-bed and the devil stares them in the face they make an act of contrition and strike their breast in sorrow; yet their life will haunt them; they see that they have given their years to the service of the devil instead of the service of God, and they are not without fear.

2. The end of many drunkards is eternal damnation. "Drunkards . . . shall not possess the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 10). There is nothing more to be said. The Apostle declares solemnly that the kingdom of God is not for the slaves of their depraved appetites. Our own reason would teach us the same even if the Apostle had not spoken so clearly. The life of a drunkard is a life of sin—can we then suppose that the gates of heaven stand open continually to invite such a one to enter? You cannot suppose this for a moment; your own good sense must tell you the contrary. For such a one there can be nothing but eternal ruin.

We have looked into the beginning, the progress, and the ultimate goal of the drunkard's career. God grant that you received a true horror of the vice of intemperance; and that each one of you will take heed lest your heart be overcharged with drunkenness. Take the advice of the Apostle: "Be not drunk with wine" (Ephes. v. 18). If you are concerned about your temporal and eternal welfare, you will be on your guard against excess in drink and will entirely avoid strong drinks, such as whiskey. There

is nothing wrong morally in taking drink in moderation, but if you find in yourselves a craving for strong drink, be on your guard, for you are in great danger and total abstinence may be the only salvation for you. The less frequently you are seen in drinking-places the better it will be for your good name, your health, and your eternal salvation. Do not follow the example of some young men who spend their last penny in drink, sit in the saloon half the night indulging in evil conversation, gambling, and drunkenness. Do not let your companions induce you to drink when you do not care for more; never treat or be treated. This latter rule would save the majority of those that in time become drunkards. If you want a drink, pay for it yourself. Be on your guard against associating with young men that are given to over-indulgence; evil companions corrupt good morals. "Exceed not and if thou sittest among many, reach not thy hand out first. How sufficient is a little wine for a man well taught" (Ecclus. xxxi. 20, 21, 22). "Be sober" (1 Pet. v. 8).

27. Improper Conversation.

"They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; the venom of asps is under their lips."—Ps. cxxxix. 4.

It is a well-known fact that certain snakes have poisonous fangs. Woe betide the unhappy traveler in the forest who is bitten by one of them! The poison circulates in his blood, the wounded member swells up, fever sets in and not unfrequently death follows. The Psalmist speaks of the poison of snakes and the venom of asps and indicates that a similar poison may flow from the mouth of man. "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; the venom of asps is under their lips." This poison is the wicked words and the foul language which proceed from the mouth of some. As the poison of snakes injures the body, so and in a greater degree evil conversations injure the soul of man. To these the Apostle refers when he says: "The tongue is indeed a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how small a fire kindleth a great wood" (James iii. 5). Impure conversation kindles a great fire, laying waste both the soul of him that speaks and of him that listens. On this account I desire to warn you to-day against this sin. Never soil your lips with filthy language, for it is

I. A disgrace to him who utters it;

II. An injury to him who listens to it.

PART I.

1. Impure language is a disgrace to him who utters it on account of the source from which it comes. It proceeds from an ill-regulated heart. Who, as a rule, are they that indulge in this kind of language? Silly young men that do not weigh their words, who think themselves smart in speaking of such subjects. Or they are frivolous men whose age has not yet taught them the gravity due to good manners or good morals. They think they cannot laugh unless there be scurrility and impurity in their conversation.

Impure language arises from an impure heart. Have you ever met with a single modest and well-behaved young man who indulged in impure language? Saintly youths, such as St. Aloysius and St. Stanislaus, actually swooned away if anything unfit for chaste ears was said in their presence, such was the sensitiveness of their pure souls. Our Lord says: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Luke vi. 45). "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications" (Matt. xv. 19). The axiom of St. Chrysostom was: "As the heart, so the words." St. Bernard tells us: "The inmost heart is often revealed by the testimony of speech, because the tongue expresses that of which the heart is full. Impure conversation is the index to an impure heart. Such a heart is like a swamp from which evil words arise like a poisonous exhalation."

Filthy language indicates a malicious heart. Unclean words are often spoken purposely to cause the

innocent to fall, or to encourage those who have already made the acquaintance of sin. Often men set themselves deliberately to work to undermine the morality of another, to poison the souls of others by impure conversation and improper anecdotes. This, then, is the source of improper language. a corrupt heart that resembles a muddy and turbid pool. Impure conversation, then, is a disgrace to him that uses it.

2. The subject of impure conversation is one of which every one ought to be ashamed, for it is impurity. Impurity brings the curse of God upon those that practise it. The man who talks in a filthy manner proclaims his own shame by showing that he delights in what is low and degrading. Moreover, the subject of impure conversation is one that gives great scandal. Immodest words fall like red-hot sparks into the soul of the listener and cause it to burn with a great flame. It is an incitement to sin. To lead others into sin is a shameful and accursed deed, which Our Lord condemned in the strongest terms: "Wo to the world because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandals come, but nevertheless wo to that man by whom the scandal cometh" (Matt. xviii. 7). Such a one disgraces himself and calls down the condemnation of God upon his head. Shame upon him who prostitutes his lips by uttering such language!

3. The instrument used in uttering words that are unchaste is the tongue. God gave us speech to praise Him, and the unclean man abuses it for filthy language. "Let no evil proceed from your mouth,

but that which is good, that it may minister grace to the hearer" (Ephes. iv. 29). He who talks in an immodest manner frustrates the purpose for which God gave him the tongue; he employs it for a purpose directly opposed to that for which it was made.

The tongue is the member on which we receive the body of Christ, and the evil speaker defiles it with impurity. No other member is allowed to touch the sacred Host than the tongue; as often as we receive the body of Our Lord the tongue becomes for a few moments the throne of His Majesty. Thus the tongue is sanctified. By uttering filthy words it is desecrated in the most shameful manner. "How shameful a thing it is," exclaims St. Chrysostom, "that the tongue, the noble member, the tongue which has often touched the body of Christ, which has been moistened with the blood of the Lord, should be misused to so vile a purpose! Is it right and fitting that a speech or a song that outrages decency should proceed out of the mouth of a Christian, the same mouth which has so often received the body of the Lord?" He who speaks indecently disgraces himself and defiles the tongue which has been sanctified by contact with God.

PART II.

1. A man who speaks in an impure manner undermines the modesty of the listener. This he does by teaching evil, for impure conversation is a school of impurity. Ask a boy how it is that he knows so much about impure things, and he will tell you that he learned it from others. Ask the young man who has

left school, and he will tell you that they talk about these things in the workshop. Ask yourself the question, and you will find that you learned all about impurity from companions whose hearts were full of it and bubbled over.

Impure conversation not only undermines the sense of modesty, but it lessens the horror for impure deeds. This is especially the case if such talk is listened to frequently. One who sees a snake for the first time recoils from it with horror, but if he sees these reptiles daily, if they crawl about under his feet, he no longer fears them. So it is with foul conversation. At first, a blush will arise on the cheeks of the hearer, he becomes indignant, but gradually he takes it more coolly, and from feeling disgust he comes to laugh at the most revolting and obscene language. In this manner modesty and chastity are injured and even destroyed entirely. The sense of propriety disappears like the sun sinks in the west behind the clouds.

2. Obscene language promotes prurient desires. This it does with infallible certainty. If a spark falls on dry hay, it is sure to ignite it; if it falls into a cask of powder, it will surely explode it. With no less certainty does impure language kindle a flame in the human heart. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33). Nor is this to be wondered at. Our nature is weak and inclined to evil. If you doubt this, consider the conduct of others and your own experience. Impure words promote carnal desires, and the impure poison spreads far and wide. If a stone is thrown into the water, it forms rings

that widen continually until the whole pool has been set in commotion. It is the same with filthy conversation; one person seduces another, and he still another, and so it goes on until the evil passes the possibility of computation. Let us suppose that an evil-talker corrupt but one in a year, and then that one corrupt another each year, in the space of twenty years the number of those corrupted would amount to more than a million. And how few evil-talkers corrupt only one in a year! The venom of impurity spreads over time and space with incalculable rapidity. The scandal does not die out, on the contrary, "it spreadeth like a cancer" (2 Tim. ii. 17). Those who have conversed on such unsavory topics lie mouldering in the grave whilst their vile talk still goes from mouth to mouth and is handed on like an accursed heirloom from generation to generation.

You see from what I have said what an evil effect bad conversation has and how much I was justified in warning you against it. I know well to what appalling extent the evil exists and that the springs from which it rises disgorge their foul streams in every street and alley of town and city. It is young men especially who defile their mouths with this mire. Alas, what things they speak and what songs they sing! One would imagine he hears the language of hell. They are so enslaved to this vice that day by day, hour by hour, whensoever they find an opportunity, obscenity must disgrace their lips. But is the evil to be condoned because it is so common? Does a pestilence cease to be a pestilence because it claims

so many victims? "Put away all filthy speech out of your mouth" (Col. iii. 8). "Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not so much as be named among you" (Ephes. v. 3). Follow the admonition of the Apostle, lest on the last day parents rise up against you and accuse you of corrupting their children, lest priests arise and accuse you of leading astray their flocks, lest angels come and accuse you of the teaching of iniquity to the little ones entrusted to their guidance. If this happens, what sentence can you expect to hear from the Judge? Take the resolution now to avoid all companions who use language unfit for ears that are pure. Part company with them at once; flee from them as you would from the devil himself. And if you must of necessity be in their company, preserve a grave demeanor, show by your looks that you find no pleasure in their talk, do not laugh at their jests, let your behavior be a rebuke to them. "Hedge in thy ears with thorns; hear not a wicked tongue" (Ecclus. xxviii. 28). "Take heed, lest being led away by the error of the unwise, you fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Pet. iii. 17).

28. Impurity.

"Fly fornication. Every sin that a man doth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."—1 Cor. vi. 18.

BEFORE the fall our first parents were free from temptations to impurity, no thought of evil ever crossed their mind. It was quite otherwise with them and their descendants after that first fatal step had been taken. Then corruption broke out like a devastating flood, laying waste the beauty of the human soul. Unclean lusts awoke in the human heart which became a source of numerous sins of impurity. In our day the evil has spread to such an extent that men are found to defend these sins and to excuse them as mere weaknesses of human nature of which we must not make too much. For this reason it is necessary to recall to mind from time to time the teaching of our holy faith on this matter. The alarming growth of this evil makes it necessary, too, to speak in plain, unequivocal terms upon this subject, which the priest, were he to consult his own inclinations, would fain pass over in silence. We shall consider

I. The gravity of sins of impurity;
II. The chastisements inflicted on account of them.

PART I.

In the scales of divine justice impurity weighs very heavy. Consider what the sin of impurity really is. It is a profanation of the image of God. Man has received from God exceptional favors and privileges: "God created man to His own image and likeness" (Gen. i. 26). "The man is the image and glory of God" (1 Cor. xi. 7). By impurity the image of God is disfigured, for the impure man gives himself to the gratification of his animal desires and thereby desecrates his soul, upon which the image of God is stamped. Luxury is likewise a desecration of the body. In this a great deal is implied. The body of man is made a member of the body of Christ in Baptism: "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" (1 Cor. vi. 15.) The body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Ghost: "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.) The libertine makes the body an instrument of bestial lusts, and thereby degrades and profanes that which is a member of the body of Christ and a temple of the Holy Ghost. What a grievous sin this is! Hence you may understand the horror which God has for the sin of impurity.

Consider in what terms God speaks of this sin. At all times He has manifested the greatest abhorrence for the sin of impurity. Holy Scripture gives abundant proof of this. It is said of Onan that the

"Lord slew him because he did a detestable thing" (Gen. xxxviii. 10). St. Paul, speaking in the name of God, exposes the abominable character of luxury: "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot?" (1 Cor. vi. 15). "He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." Such is the magnitude of the abhorrence which God has for this sin that under the Old Law certain sins of this nature were punished by death (Lev. xx. 12, 13). The language of the Fathers of the Church is equally explicit on this point. Deeply versed as they were in the law of God, they invariably denounced luxury in the strongest terms. St. Jerome says: "Impurity of the rational man makes of him an irrational beast." Hugh of St. Victor teaches: "Debauchery stains the soul and is an abomination before God. It causes horror to the angels and delights only by the devils. The fire of lust draws down to hell, the smoke of it rises up to heaven and cries for vengeance." From the language of the Sacred Scriptures and of the Doctors of the Church we must conclude that the sin of impurity is indeed a most grievous one.

It is a grievous sin even in matters that might seem of little importance. Even a thought freely consented to is a sin worthy of eternal damnation. A thought arises in a moment in the mind, the intellect sees its sinfulness and the will adheres to it—a mortal sin is committed. Such is the teaching of the theologians, even of those generally considered most mild in their

opinions. What must be the gravity of the sin of impurity when even the thought of an impure thing freely entertained constitutes so grievous a sin!

Consider the sins of the eyes. A glance as quick as thought is cast upon an impure object, and yet such a glance, quick though it be, may lead to mortal sin. "I say unto you that whosoever shall look upon a woman to lust after her hath already committeth adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. v. 28). What importance attaches to unchaste looks!

Consider the gravity of impure speech. The lips are opened in a moment, how quickly a word is spoken! Yet every impure word is abhorrent to God, and may become a mortal sin. "The venom of asps is under their lips" (Ps. cxxxix. 4). "The tongue," says St. Bernard, "is the most to be feared of all vipers; it imparts its poison in a single breath."

If God is ready to punish with eternal hell-fire a mere thought, a look, a word, what must be the gravity of a sin committed in deed against the virtue of chastity! Do not imagine that you can escape the guilt by saying that it is a mere weakness of nature; do not excuse yourselves by referring to the great number of those round about you that may be guilty of these sins. No excuse will avail; God has set His law against this sin and will pronounce judgment according to His justice. Beware of this poison, watch over your thoughts and desires, guard against evil associations; for these things will lead you into the commission of such sin. Never carry the load of such a sin upon your conscience, if you should have fallen

into it; the load will bear you down, even to the depths of hell.

PART II.

1. God judges and punishes impurity severely in this life. This we can learn from the chastisements which in the past He has sent upon men guilty of this sin. The deluge was largely owing to this sin: "God saw that the earth was corrupted, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon earth" (Gen. vi. 12). Remember also the fate of the cities of the plain: "The cry of Sodom and Gomorrha is multiplied, and their sin is become exceeding grievous" (Gen. xviii. 20). At Settim four and twenty thousand were put to death by God's command on account of this sin (Numb. xxv. 9). How God must hate the sin of impurity can be learned clearly from these punishments.

Besides these punishments by which God showed His judgment of impurity, He has also connected certain chastisements directly with the indulgence of sensuality. These are terrible as they affect the body. Holy Scripture describes them when it says of the impure: "Rottenness and worms shall inherit them" (Ecclus. xix. 3). Debauchery often brings most loathesome diseases in its train. Many a one goes about with pallid countenance, an unsteady gait, a living corpse, on account of his sins. Many a one is a mere wreck of humanity on account of sins of impurity committed in his youth. In the hospitals of the larger towns sights may be seen too revolting to describe here, men of whom the doctors can tell you that

the seeds of their present condition were laid in their youth by an impure life. "The Nazarites were whiter than snow, purer than milk. Their face is now made blacker than coals, their skin hath stuck to their bones, it is withered, and is become like wood" (Lam. iv. 7, 8). Not unfrequently the libertine is carried to an early grave by reason of his sins.

Still more terrible are the consequences of sensuality as they affect the soul. The curse of Heaven is poured out upon the soul of the sinner. Sins of impurity inflict a deep wound upon the soul and awaken the terrors of conscience in the breast of the sinner. If persevered in impurity blinds the sinner and renders him indifferent to his state, it draws him further and further from God and produces obduracy of heart, which resists conversion and penance. Sensuality is the parent of impenitence.

2. God punishes impurity with the greatest severity in eternity. This we know from Holy Scripture, where God states that the impure will be excluded from the kingdom of heaven: "Do not err: Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate shall possess the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 9). "Know ye this and understand that no fornicator, or unclean person hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephes. v. 5). By the inheritance of Christ the kingdom of heaven is understood, and of this God said: "There shall not enter into it anything defiled" (Apoc. xxi. 27). Terrible indeed are the judgments of God as regards the impure; He shuts them out from His kingdom and will not tolerate them

in His presence. Nor is this all; they are cast into hell. "They shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Apoc. xxi. 8). In the fire of hell they will groan forever in despair. "The smoke of their torments shall ascend for ever and ever: neither have they rest day nor night" (Apoc. xiv. 11).

Here we see the chastisements meted out to the impure. God punishes them in this life and in the next. "He shall rain snares upon sinners: fire and brimstone and storms of wind shall be the portion of their cup" (Ps. x. 7). Even in this life they shall suffer for their crimes, but far more sharp will be their suffering in eternity, when the gates of eternal life shall be closed against them and the gates of death shall open to receive them. "They will descend to the place where everlasting horror dwelleth" (Job x. 22).

To-day we have considered the gravity of sins of impurity and the chastisements which are inflicted upon the impure. The words I have spoken are words of truth, and they will remain unshaken even if the whole world conspire to treat the matter lightly and to declaim against them as fables. God grant that they may sink deep into your hearts and leave there an everlasting impression. Let these words be before you through life and be with you in the hour of temptation. Form a solemn resolution to abhor this sin from the bottom of your heart. Never listen to the voice of the tempter; the fruit may be pleasing to the eye, but within it is filled with bitterness beyond ex-

pression. Be masters, not slaves of your desires. The means to overcome temptation are found in prayer, custody of the senses, watchfulness over one's thoughts and speech, avoidance of evil companions, and the reception of the sacraments. By the use of these means the soul will live in peace. Go to the sacraments monthly and you will have no difficulty in overcoming temptation. St. Bernard says: "Let the glowing heat of the fire in hell extinguish in thee the fire of sensual desires, let the greater heat overcome the lesser; the horrible crackling of the flames that are unquenchable will banish from your soul all delight in unchaste pleasures."

29. The Seducer and His Reward.

"*He that deceiveth the just in a wicked way shall fall in his own destruction.*—Prov. xxviii. 10.

Let us suppose that there is a shepherd who has a large flock of beautiful lambs all of which are dear to him as the apple of his eye, that some night an evil-minded person under cover of the darkness enters their stable and kills some of these lambs; will the shepherd not be angry and grieve over his loss? Or let us suppose that there is a gardener who has many beautiful flowers which he cultivates with great care, that some morning he finds all of them trampled under foot and destroyed; would he not be sadly vexed by such an evil deed? Now, if a shepherd mourns over his sheep and a gardener over his flowers, how much more will not Jesus Christ mourn and grieve over souls which are led astray, souls every one of which He has bought with His precious blood! Let us consider to-day the work of the seducer who destroys the souls which are dear to Christ, and the reward that he will receive for his evil deeds. We will discuss

I. The work of the seducer;
II. The recompense that awaits him.

PART I.

By seducing we mean the leading of another from the path of virtue into that of sin. A man who leads another to commit mortal sin, no matter of what nature, is a seducer. But because the sins of impurity are very grievous and because seduction in this matter is most common, we generally restrict the meaning of the word to the leading of others into sins of impurity. Besides this another restriction is made —we apply the word only to the leading of pure and innocent persons into sins of impurity, because these sins are so abhorrent in their nature that the innocent do not as a rule fall into them except at the instigation of others, but once they have fallen they require no such incitation.

1. Consider the malice of the seducer. His act is that of a robber who deprives his neighbor of his most valuable possession. He robs him of divine grace, of which the Holy Spirit says: "All gold compared to her is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay" (Wisd. vii. 9). "The finest gold shall not purchase it, neither shall silver be counted in exchange for it. It shall not be compared with the dyed colors of India, or with the most precious stone, sardonyx, or the sapphire" (Job xxviii. 15, 16). By mortal sin into which the seducer leads his victim divine grace is destroyed in the soul. Moreover, the merits acquired for heaven are also lost by sin. "If the just man turn himself away from his justice . . . . all his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered" (Ezech.

xviii. 24). A soul in the state of grace daily earns merit for eternal life, in exchange for which it is to obtain the crown of glory hereafter. The seducer deprives the soul of these merits when he causes her to fall into sin. She becomes poor and naked, and may be compared to a tree whose blossoms are blighted and cut off by the frost, to a field of grain destroyed by a hail-storm, or to a palace devastated by a conflagration. The seducer takes from the soul all her brightest hopes. The soul in the state of grace is an heir to the kingdom of heaven; she has a well-founded title to the crown of immortality. She looks forward to the future with confidence and hope in the reward to come. All this is swept away by the sin into which she was enticed to fall. She ceases to be an heir to heaven and becomes an heir to hell; her name is erased from the Book of Life. How appalling is the act of the seducer! He is not only a robber, but a murderer.

The seducer deprives the soul of supernatural life. By grace man lives in God and God lives in him; by grace he is engrafted as a living branch into the heavenly vine which is Jesus Himself. In Him he lives and bears fruit, in Him he is to blossom for all eternity. This life of grace is destroyed by mortal sin, and is followed by spiritual death, a death which is infinitely more terrible than the death of the body. This is the work of the seducer: "His feet run to evil, and make haste to shed innocent blood" (Is. lix. 7). He may well be called the murderer of him whom he seduces. St. Gregory says: "If thou dost entice

thy brother to sin, thou dealest him his death-blow." Such action is entirely unexcusable; it is an evil that cannot be compensated by any worldly gain. For the ransom of such a soul the Son of God offered up the sufferings and tears of thirty-three years of earthly existence, for her He died upon the cross. How will the seducer answer for his act before the judgment-seat of the Most High?

2. Consider the unhappiness of him that is led into sin. Misfortune overtakes the unhappy victim of the seducer in this life. "Know thou and see that it is an evil and bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God" (Jer. ii. 19). Would you know what the bitter fruits of the tree of iniquity are? I will mention two: interior misery and outward misery. The peace of heaven which dwells in the innocent soul is banished when she yields to sin, and the terror of a guilty conscience is aroused. "The sound of dread is always in his ears. Tribulation shall terrify him and distress surround him" (Job xv. 21, 24). Besides this there is the outward misery. Look at the consequences of sin in so many cases: disgrace, loss of employment, illness, poverty, or even an untimely death. The stars of hope seem to vanish from the firmament.

Unhappiness in time as well as in eternity is the lot of those led into sin. Through God's grace, it is true, the sinner can rise from sin and do penance, but not all sinners do this. It happens so frequently that the soul once led into sin never again returns to the path of virtue. The stone loosened from its place does not stop until it has reached the lowest depth of

the chasm, and a man who has once drunk of the poison of sin is stupefied by it. From one sin he proceeds to another, then to a third, and so he goes on until the habit of sin is fixed. The habit becomes an irresistible craving, the indulgence of this craving leads to impenitence, and impenitence to an unholy death. "When the wicked man is dead, there shall be no hope any more" (Prov. xi. 7). Then indeed tribulation has overtaken him, tribulation beyond understanding and without end.

On whom does the blame for all this misery fall? Who prepared the way for it? The seducer. Consequently the deed of one who leads another into sin is truly an abominable one, one more deserving condemnation than that of a man who plunges a dagger into the heart of a friend or hurls a firebrand into his neighbor's house.

PART II.

1. The seducer's reward is frequently a death of anguish and misery on account of the magnitude of his crimes. At the hour of death the sinner's eyes are opened. What does he see by the light of the burning taper by his side? He sees the crimes of which he was guilty; he sees the number of souls ruined by his filthy conversation and by his incitements to evil. He remembers all the evil that he has done, he remembers the young men and women whom he robbed of their innocence and cast into the mire of sin. Anguish and apprehension will take hold of him, and drops of sweat will pour down his coun-

tenance. The words of the Psalmist will be true of him: "The fear of death is fallen upon me" (Ps. liv. 5). His fear and dread will be increased as he thinks of the Judge whom he has outraged and insulted. He knows full well that he must soon appear before the tribunal of God. What a shudder will run over his whole frame and penetrate into the marrow of his bones at this thought! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebr. x. 31). He must appear before the eternal Judge to give an account of all he has done in the presence of Him who is the "searcher of hearts and veins" (Ps. vii. 10). Well may he say: "Fear has seized upon me, and trembling, and all my bones are affrighted" (Job iv. 14).

2. His reward in eternity is hell with endless torments. Throughout eternity he is punished by the wrath of a just God. "A fire is kindled in My wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell. I will heap evils upon them, and will spend My arrows among them (Deut. xxxii. 22, 23). It is anger that will be rained upon them without ceasing, an anger that will inflict wounds that cannot be healed. There will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth"; weeping because the fire cannot be extinguished, and gnashing of teeth because the worm shall never die. Amid these torments the seducer will be persecuted by the curses of those he has led into sin.

How often it happens that souls once led astray never return again to the path of virtue! The curses of these lost souls will forever pursue the seducer, they

will ever be in his ears and weigh upon his heart. If the blood of Abel cried so loudly to the Lord for vengeance on his brother, how much louder will the blood of lost souls cry in accusation of their murderers! How bitterly they will complain and call down all manner of evil upon the heads of those who were to them the cause of their present misery, the authors of all the evil that has come upon them! They will pursue their seducers with endless imprecations in hell, and will curse them every moment of their existence. "He put on cursing like a garment and it went like water into his entrails and like oil into his bones" (Ps. cviii. 18).

We have considered to-day the work of the seducer and his recompense; the work is a most terrible one, the recompense most terrifying. How does this concern us? Do not ask such a question; remember the frequency of temptation. What are illicit intimacies but a school of seduction? What are evil conversations? How often it happens that young men set themselves to work with the purpose of leading others into sin, endeavoring to ensnare others, seeking a hundred ways to teach them evil? How many a boy is taught sins of impurity by an older brother or companion? Are you free from guilt in this regard? If so, you are to be called happy and blessed. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way" (Ps. cxviii. 1). But woe to you if you must plead guilty in this matter. You have done evil which will grow and spread despite all that you can do now to arrest it. "Wo to the man by whom scandal cometh" (Matt.

xviii. 7) are the words of Our Lord. There is indeed the way of penance open to you, and "if your sins be as scarlet they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be made white as wool" (Is. i. 18). Though God in His mercy will forgive you your sins if you repent sincerely of them; yet the evil that you have done can never be made good entirely, and there will be cause for you to mourn the injury done to others all the days of your life. Be on your guard, Christian young men, against playing the tempter of the innocent. I implore you for the love of God, for the love of your own immortal soul, never say one word or commit one single action that may be a source of scandal to the innocent.

30. The One Thing Necessary.

"*One thing is necessary.*"—Luke x. 42.

MEN are anxious and troubled about many things, their solicitude is mainly directed to what is material and transitory. Dress, money, lands, eating, drinking, sport, pleasure; these things engross their thoughts, on these the desires of their heart are centered. Faith does not prohibit us from caring for temporal things, but the solicitude for them must not be uppermost and must not degenerate into that which is sinful. We cannot be entirely without solicitude in a world abounding in cares and tribulations. The misfortune is that in our solicitude for the temporal we are apt to forget that which is eternal. Perhaps you too are concerned about many things, and are forgetful of the one thing necessary. For this reason I wish to-day to call your attention to the importance of this one thing which should occupy your mind more than all others. We shall see

I. That there is but one thing God requires of us;
II. That there is but one thing for which God will reward us.

PART I.

1. God has ordained all things to the end that we should serve Him. Consider the act of creation. For what end did God create man? Solely for the end that we should serve Him. Many passages of Holy Scripture teach this in the plainest terms. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole soul and with thy whole heart, and with thy whole mind and with thy whole strength" (Mark. xii. 30). The complete surrender of man to God's service is here demanded. "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. iv. 3). It is the will of God that we sanctify our lives, or, what is the same thing, that we live in conformity with the will of God; in other words, that we serve God. "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. iv. 10). The service of God is our only business in life. "Whatsoever you do, do all for the glory of God" is the teaching of St. Paul. Even our most ordinary actions are to be directed to this one purpose, to the service of God. God created man for this purpose; hence this is our principal reason for existence.

Consider the Redemption. Why did the Son of God become man? Why did He shed His blood upon the cross? "Christ died for all that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 15). The work of the redemption was accomplished for the same purpose, that we should live for Him who died for us; that is to say, that we consecrate our lives entirely to His service.

2. God has made His service the first commandment for men. He commands us to serve Him. His service consists in the accomplishment of His will and the observance of His law. In the olden times He gave His law to His people, and then in the fulness of time He explained it more fully through His only-begotten Son, whom He sent into the world. He insists on the keeping of His law. "My son, forget not My law, and let thy heart keep My commandments" (Prov. iii. 1). "Why," Our Lord asks, "call Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke vi. 46). "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only" (James ii. 10). From these words we see that God requires us to serve Him and that He will not allow us to serve any one else.

"Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve" (Luke iv. 8). God prohibits the service of the world. "If any man love the world the charity of the Father is not in him" (1 John ii. 15). "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. xii. 2). God prohibits the service of wealth. "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. vi. 24). "Amen I say unto you, a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix. 23, 24). God prohibits the service of iniquity. "Let not sin reign in your mortal body so as to obey the lusts thereof; neither yield you your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin" (Rom. vi. 12, 13).

Thus we see that God requires but one thing of us, that we serve Him. He has placed us in the world for this purpose, and has enjoined His service upon us. Any other service than this He will not, He cannot tolerate in us. The service of God is the one thing necessary.

PART II.

1. Only that which we do for God will obtain a recompense from Him. Holy Scripture tells us of the manner in which God recompenses the just. "Say to the just man that it is well, for he shall eat of the fruit of his doings" (Is. iii. 10). This recompense will be exceeding great. "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I shall place thee over many things" (Matt. xxv. 21). "Good measure and pressed down and shaken together shall they give into your bosom" (Luke vi. 38). Even here upon earth God begins to repay the service rendered Him. He rewards the just with the consolation of a good conscience, with peace of mind, and oftentimes with health of body and temporal prosperity. "All thy children [the servants of God] shall be taught of the Lord: and great shall be their peace" (Is. liv. 13). "They that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good" (Ps. xxxiii. 11). "If thou wilt walk in My ways and keep My precepts and My commandments, I will lengthen thy days" (3 Kings iii. 14). They that cling to Him steadfastly and observe His commandments will receive a reward hereafter far beyond any thing that we can think or imagine. "They shall re-

ceive an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that cannot fade" (1 Pet. i. 4). They shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, where all evil is banished and where they will be filled with all good.

The service of God will earn for us a most glorious reward. Of this there can be no doubt; God Himself has promised it. On nearly every page of Holy Writ the promise of this reward is reiterated; God confirms it with an oath. We accept the word of a man who is known to us to be honest—how much more confidence then ought we to have in the word of God!

2. All that is not done for God is vain and devoid of all permanent good. A man may perform the most admirable works in the world, yet if they are not performed for God they will not obtain any recompense from God for him. A man may study day and night and become a light in the intellectual world, he may win the applause and admiration of his fellow men; a man may rise through his efforts from the lowest station in life to the highest, he may even win a crown for himself, he may conquer many nations; he may do all this, yet if God has no place in his thoughts, if his aspirations are centered upon worldly things, all goes for nothing; what he has done is without value for eternity, it is effort exerted in vain. "Many will say to Me in that day: Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in Thy name, and cast out devils in Thy name, and done many miracles in Thy name? And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from Me, you that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 22, 23). "Amen, I say unto you, they have received

their reward" (Matt. vi. 5). All that is not done for God will prove in vain.

"If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 1). The Apostle speaks of very great sacrifices which are still powerless to obtain the kingdom of heaven, because they are not made with the right intention, because they are not made for God's sake. This is indeed true; however great the privations you may impose upon yourself, whether you toil hard by day and deprive yourself of sleep by night, whether you deny yourself every gratification and perform great works of penance, unless these things be done for God and out of love for Him, all is in vain and will have no weight in the balance of eternity. It is as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. xiii. 1).

There is but one thing that God repays—the service rendered Him. This service merits a most glorious reward; all else is useless and unprofitable, however brilliant it may appear to the world. The service of God is accordingly the one thing necessary.

What I have put before you to-day is one of the fundamental truths of our faith, which is as certain and as immovable as God Himself. One thing is necessary, the service of God, and all else is of no account when not done for Him. How is it with you in respect to this one necessary thing? Have you made it the principal object of your life? Alas, there are many young men who are anxious about all sorts

of things, but not about the one thing necessary. They live for the world, conform themselves to the ways of the world, and care little for that which is eternal. Year after year passes by, they grow old, and when death stretches out his hands toward them they have laid up no treasures for eternity, they are poor and naked. Thus they appear before the judgment-seat of God empty-handed. They have lost their chance, and what a loss it is! They will hear the words of the Judge: "Amen, I say unto you, I know you not" (Luke x. 42). My friends, I beseech you, act wisely and prudently. You have a keen perception of your temporal interests—look well to your eternal welfare. Do not neglect the salvation of your souls, your eternal happiness. It is the one thing necessary. Your eternal welfare consists in the service of God in this life, in the keeping of His commandments. If you hold this before you always, you will enjoy peace of mind and a good conscience here upon earth and the eternal glory of heaven hereafter. Away with the service of the world! Away with the service of sin! Let the will of God be your rule through life, let it guide every thought, every word, every deed. "The service of God," says St. Chrysostom, "is not burdensome, but honorable; and He will repay your service a thousandfold."

PART II.

OUTLINES OF SERMONS FOR YOUNG WOMEN

1. The Young Ladies' Sodality.

"*The mercy of the Lord is from eternity, and unto eternity upon them that fear Him. And His justice to such as keep His covenant.*"—Ps. cii. 17, 18.

You have formed a covenant amongst yourselves, and thereby your hearts have been drawn more close together; the bond that unites you one to another has been made more true and lasting. This union is profitable to you in many ways, more especially for the weaker ones amongst you; for them it is what the stake is for the vine, the prop to which it clings whilst it gladly climbs upward to the light of heaven. Unfortunately, the blessings appertaining to such sodalities are not sufficiently appreciated by the very ones who need them most. My object in to-day's discourse is to awaken fresh vitality and new zeal in the hearts of those amongst you who do not derive all the benefit from the sodality which they should derive. To the sodality are attached

I. Great privileges;
II. Solemn obligations.

PART I.

1. Your sodality is a league of grace. It opens to you a twofold source of grace. In the first place, the Church is a fountain of grace and the different sodali-

ties in her enjoy many means of grace. Amongst these, indulgences stand out prominently. Various plenary indulgences may be gained by those who belong to the sodality; one on the day of entrance into the sodality, and many others in the course of the year. . . . Besides these, there are many partial indulgences that may be gained by the members of your sodality. . . . Then there are the treasures of grace attached to the reception of the sacraments. The members of the sodality approach the Lord's table frequently in a body, and thus all are urged to receive the sacraments more regularly as also more frequently than they would otherwise do. The Church wishes her children to approach frequently the sacred table to be fed on the body of Christ, and to be filled with His grace; to this end the sodality is a great help.

Besides this, there is another source of grace and blessing open to you in your sodality, and this is—your own course of action. Grace comes to you through your own activity; in the first place, by the prayers you recite. You are bound to pray for one another, and certain prayers are prescribed by your sodality to be said daily. Although these prayers do not bind under sin, yet when faithfully said they are a powerful means of grace for yourselves and for the other members of your society. "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive" (Matt. xxi. 22). "Prayer," says St. Chrysostom, "is a treasury of inexhaustible riches; it is the source and parent of all blessings; it is mightier than the forces of a kingdom." Another means of grace found in your sodality is the

example you give one another. As a flame is enkindled from another flame, so one heart is enkindled with the love of God by contact with another that loves God. The force of example is greater than that of precept, a good example does more to lead men to God than a hundred sermons.

2. Your sodality is an honored association. It is according to the mind of the Church, which approves of such associations. The Church recognizes the usefulness of sodalities for the various classes of persons that make up her children, and gives her approval and blessing to them. Your sodality is held in honor by the Church. The Church is the "pillar and ground of truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15), the divinely appointed teacher of mankind, the spouse of the Holy Ghost, and the exponent of the mysteries of God. It is impossible for her to sanction that which is harmful to her children, she cannot call good that which is bad. What an honor to belong to a sodality of the character which the Church loves to see!

The object of your sodality is a holy one. It is the sanctification of its members; that in them the command might be fulfilled: "Be you perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 48). "He that is holy let him be sanctified still" (Apoc. xxii. 11). The object of the sodality, then, is to promote piety and holiness among its members and to lead them closer to God. What could be more honorable, more noble, more sublime, than this aim, the sanctification of men!

It is an honored society also from the fact that the most virtuous in the congregation belong to it. In the

register of your sodality are inscribed those that can meet the scrutiny of the world without blushing, whose virtues are acknowledged by all. From this garner the chaff is thrown out; those who sully their good name are not wanted—as dead branches they are cut off from the tree. The children of Belial have no part in your sodality. To belong to this society is a great honor.

3. It is also an association of charity. It deserves this name because all the members are united together in sisterly love. We are, it is true, bound by the law of charity to all men; the solemn command: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," is of universal application and binds all. Every man is a neighbor to his fellow man; no distinction of family or race can be considered; all have the same human nature. Yet this association links itself together with still closer bonds than those of a common nature. It makes you all sisters of one another; it unites you with the tie of affection, almost as strong as that of blood. In order that this union may be found amongst you, you are exhorted to do services of kindness to one another, to extend a helping hand to one another in the trials of life, especially when danger menaces the soul of a sister. You ought to visit one another in time of sickness, and if possible attend the funeral of a sister in time of death.

Your sodality is one of charity because it ought to aid you in enkindling the love of God in your hearts. The real reason of all sodalities and confraternities is to save souls and to imbue them with the love of God. The virtue of charity is the end of our lives, it is the first and most perfect of all virtues, it is the light of

day, the sun, in our spiritual life. "If I speak with the tongue of men and angels, . . . and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 13). St. Bernard says that even chastity without charity resembles a lamp without oil. The principal object of your sodality is to enkindle this flame of charity in you. For this purpose, you are urged to be instant in prayer, you are invited to receive the sacraments frequently; for this purpose, instructions are given you concerning the duties of your state in life, and you are urged to lead a pious and godly life.

These are some of the privileges and blessings that attach to your sodality; it is an association abounding in graces; it is an association that is honored by the Church and by men; it is an association of charity. Ought you not to rejoice in having membership in it? You ought to take pride in it and pay no attention to any one who would belittle it. "They blaspheme those things which they know not" (2 Pet. ii. 12).

PART II.

Let us proceed to consider the obligations which your sodality puts upon you. You must by no means imagine that you have done all that is necessary if you pay your subscription and attend the meetings of the sodality. This is the least that is required of you. Your sodality lays upon you far higher and more solemn obligations. I will mention especially two things that are required of you.

1. That you should hold aloof from the world and its enticements. Nothing is more dangerous for you

than to mix freely in the world with its vanity and sensuality. Thousands have made shipwreck upon the treacherous waters of the world: "Whosoever will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God" (James iv. 4). The world is full of allurements for the unwise. It is precisely on account of the great number who become a prey to the seductions of the world that your sodality was formed to keep you from following in their way. You must, then, turn your backs upon the world, and must guard against two dangers particularly.

The first of these is vanity. A haughty spirit comes before the fall. "From pride all perdition took its beginning" (Tob. iv. 14). St. Gregory calls pride the queen of all sins. Let a young woman once become vain, and the spirit of hell will have an easy victory. Hence your sodality urges upon you the obligation of flying from the vanity of the world. To be good members of the Young Ladies' Sodality you must avoid all vanity in dress and outward appearance.

Besides this, you must shun the indulgence of the senses. On this rock many a one has suffered shipwreck. "Eve saw that the tree was good to eat and fair to the eyes and delightful to behold, and she took of the fruit thereof" (Gen. iii. 6). "If you live according to the flesh you shall die" (Rom. viii. 13). Evil concupiscence is the root of all vices. Sensuality is especially aroused by frequenting dances, by dangerous intimacies with young men. Accordingly, your sodality puts upon you the obligation of avoiding these dangers.

2. Another most solemn obligation laid upon you by your sodality is to draw nearer to God. The object of the sodality is, as has been said, the sanctification of its members. Hence there is an obligation upon its members to serve God, and that in gladness. "Prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God" (Rom. xii. 2). What is the will of God in regard to each one of you? You are daughters; hence you are commanded to honor your father and your mother. If you are in the employ of others, you are commanded to obey them. And all of you are exhorted to purity of life. Such is the will of God in your regard, and His will must be your supreme law.

You must accomplish His will gladly and perseveringly. It will profit you but little if to-day you kneel at the altar and to-morrow are the queen of the dancing-room; it will be of little avail if to-day you prostrate yourself before the altar and to-morrow indulge in dangerous company. Of what avail will it be to go to confession to-day and to return to your sins to-morrow? To make good resolutions one day only to break them on the next? When once you have become a member of this sodality you must live the life of a Christian young woman, without looking back longingly to the sinful pleasures of the world. "No man, putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 62).

The sodality of which you are members places solemn obligations upon you; in particular two things are demanded of you—that you should hold aloof from the world, and draw nearer to God. If every one of

you were to fulfill these obligations, what a blessing this sodality would become to the parish! It would be a family of saints, the family of God upon earth, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Begin at once; do your utmost to bring about this result.

2. The Christian Young Woman's Crown.

"*I put a beautiful crown upon thy head.*"—Ezech. xvi. 12.

THE prophet Ezechiel gives a vivid and fascinating description of a soul whom God has chosen and drawn close to Himself. Besides other favors which He bestows on her, He puts a crown upon her head. It is customary on certain occasions for young women to wear crowns of flowers upon their heads. The wreath upon the head ought to be a symbol of the wreath that adorns the heart. The wreath upon the head fades and withers, but the spiritual wreath in the heart should be ever fresh and green. It is of this wreath that it is said: "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Apoc. iii. 11). Important truths are indicated by the wreath upon your head, and for this reason I wish to speak to you about the crown or wreath which should adorn you.

I. In general;
II. In detail.

PART I.

1. The wreath which you wear betokens the dignity of a ruler. On occasions of special solemnity rulers and princes wear crowns of great value. The Church herself places the crown upon the head of Catholic mon-

archs with impressive ceremonies. The crown is an outward sign of earthly dominion. The wreath upon the head of a Christian young woman has a similar signification; she is to rule, not over worldly possessions, but, in the first place, over her own heart.

By the sin of our first parents the spirit of rebellion and insubordination found its way into the human heart. "I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. . . . I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members" (Rom. vii. 18, 23). The heart of man, although created for the service of God, is prone to rise up in revolt against its Creator and say: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?" (Ex. v. 2.) The Christian maiden holds her heart in check, that heart which is so inclined to anger, self-will, impatience. She listens to the words of God: "Follow not the desires of thy heart" (Ecclus. v. 2). If she does this, she has every right to wear the crown of a ruler.

Further, she must govern her senses. The senses of the body are the allies of a corrupt heart, and supply it with weapons when it rebels against God. To how many offences against the majesty of the Most High the senses, especially the eyes and ears, give rise! The Christian maiden must control her senses, the eyes, the ears, the palate. "Hedge in thy ears with thorns, hear not a wicked tongue" (Ecclus. xxviii. 28). "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out" (Matt. v. 29). Let her act thus, and she will truly wear the ruler's crown.

2. The wreath is an ornament of a conqueror. In olden times those that conquered in battle or contest were adorned with wreaths. St. Paul refers to this when he speaks of the prize that is given to the victor in a race. "Know you not that they that run in the race all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things, and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown" (1 Cor. ix. 24, 25). In the times of the ancient Romans it was customary for a victorious general to enter the city decked with a laurel wreath. Holy Scripture speaks of the reward of the saints in heaven under the figure of a crown, the "crown of glory." The Christian young woman who wears a wreath should, then, be a conqueror, and that in a threefold sense.

She must triumph over the world. The world will not leave a young girl without seeking to delude her. Now flattery and sweet words are poured into her ears, then promises and vows are resorted to, and finally raillery and contempt are employed. "An enemy speaketh sweetly with his lips" (Ecclus. xii. 15). "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. vii. 15).

The Christian young woman must triumph over the flesh. No one is exempt from these temptations. "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured" (James i. 13). The temptations of the flesh are difficult to withstand, they are a raging fire within one's own blood. The true Christian

young woman triumphs over these temptations, and so makes herself worthy of the crown of a conqueror.

Finally, she must triumph over the powers of hell. The devil arms himself for battle. He is the "roaring lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. v. 8). He is a "murderer from the beginning" (John viii. 44). He lays snares for the innocent, and does all in his power to entrap them. The truly Christian maiden triumphs over all his attempts, and rightly wears the victor's crown.

You now understand the beautiful signification which a wreath has; it is the emblem of the ruler's dignity and of the conqueror's triumphs. Are you warranted in wearing this wreath? Are you rulers and conquerors? Do you dominate your heart and your senses? Are you victorious over the world, the flesh, and the devil? If so, then your crown shines with the brightness of the sun in the sight of God. But if it is otherwise with you, if you allow the perverse desires of your heart to dominate over you, if in the conflict with your enemies you allow yourself to be overcome, then you may as well cast from you the wreath upon your head, since its signification does not apply to you.

PART II.

Let us now consider the wreath in its details, by considering the different parts that go to make it up. It is usually composed of white and red roses, woven together with sprigs of rosemary or green leaves of some kind. All this has a sublime signification.

1. The white rose is an emblem of innocence. White is the color of innocence. For this reason the infant who has been cleansed in the laver of regeneration from every stain of sin is dressed in a white robe. In the early ages of the Church the newly baptized wore white garments for a week after Baptism. The white rose in your wreath admonishes you to safeguard your innocence. Would that you could say with holy Job: "I am clean and without sin; I am unspotted and there is no iniquity in me" (Job xxxiii. 9). Would that you had never in your whole life committed one sin, that you had never offended God grievously in anything! If this be the case, then the white rose still shines in your wreath, and it is a fitting emblem for you.

The white rose is also an emblem of virginity. The angels and the virgins in heaven are represented as wearing white robes (John xx. 12). Our Lord is represented clad in a white robe, and on the day of His Transfiguration "His garments became white as snow" (Matt. xvii. 2). Let the white rose remind you to keep your heart pure and chaste. It is this if every evil thought, every shadow of impurity is abhorrent to you. Your heart is pure if you do not surrender it to the dominion of evil desires, if you do not give it to earthly love. God grant that you may ever preserve your heart pure and unspotted. In that case the white rose in your wreath has a doubly beautiful signification.

2. The red rose symbolizes the fervor of devotion. A burning fire throws a red glow upon all objects around it, and, therefore, red is chosen to indicate the

ardent devotion that burns in the soul. Let the red rose in your wreath admonish you to be diligent in your daily prayers and to pray with the proper devotion. Do this; time will not be lacking. Perhaps the house of God is not far from your home, or you pass it during the day; hear Mass if you can; if not, make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Make use of every opportunity, and you will lay by great treasures of merit in heaven by your pious practices.

The red rose is also an emblem of love. Red is the color of the blood in our veins. Christ shed His blood out of love for us; for this reason the Church chooses this color to indicate charity, or love. Let the red rose be ever a reminder to you to cherish in your heart a fervent love of God, and to keep it free from sensual, sinful love. Let the love of Christ ever reign there; "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. xxvi. 22). Let the Lord Jesus be the *alpha* and the *omega,* the first and the last, in your lives. Prove your love for Him by virtuous actions. "Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John iii. 18).

3. Green leaves are intertwined in your wreath. These signify fidelity. Green is the color chosen to denote unswerving faithfulness. For this reason the bride wears a wreath of myrtle or orange blossoms on her wedding-day, as a sign that she will be faithful to her husband until death. Let the green sprigs in your wreath recall to your mind the obligation of being faithful to your Lord and Master, and of persevering in His service until death. "Be thou faithful until

death" (Apoc. ii. 10), this is the admonition of Holy Scripture. To begin well is no great credit to a man, but to persevere is worthy of the highest praise. However beautiful the red and white roses in your wreath may be, they are of no benefit to you if the green sprigs of fidelity are wanting; if, after leading a pure and holy life for a time, you turn away to the service of the devil.

Green is further the color of hope. When the fields and meadows begin to grow verdant under the rays of the sun in spring, hope re-awakens in the heart of man. Let the green leaves inspire in your heart a strong hope of the great reward which will be meted out to you for your fidelity in the service of God. What is this reward? "The just shall live for evermore; and their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them with the Most High. Therefore they shall receive a kingdom of glory and a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord" (Wisd. v. 16, 17). Think often of this glorious reward that awaits you, and it will strengthen you in fidelity to God.

In conclusion let me exhort you: "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Apoc. iii. 11). You know the mystic meaning of the wreath; do not forget the instruction you have received, and wear the crown that should adorn your heart. Let the wreath that you placed upon your head on entering the sodality and on other occasions be a symbol to you of the wreath of virtues that you should always wear here upon earth, and which you will one day exchange for the crown of glory in heaven.

3. The Bride of Heaven.

"*My beloved to me, and I to Him.*"—Cant. ii. 16.

In the Canticle of canticles these words are put in the mouth of the spouse: "My beloved to me, and I to Him." The Church applies them to express the relationship existing between the Son of God and chosen souls. Our Lord is the Bridegroom and the chaste soul is His spouse. This truth is also expressed in the writings of the Fathers of the Church; St. Ambrose, for instance, writes: "Let no one wonder that virgins are compared to the angels, since they are espoused to the Lord of angels." Learn from this the value of purity of soul, and the loftiness to which it elevates poor mortal man who is but dust. Would not each one of you wish to be a bride of heaven? Let us contemplate to-day what a glorious thing it is to be betrothed to the Son of God. For this purpose we shall consider the bride of heaven

I. In her bridal attire;

II. In her nuptial bliss.

PART I.

1. The bride of heaven presents herself to her celestial Spouse in a wedding-garment. This in a spiritual sense is the robe of sanctifying grace. Only in this

garment is the soul pleasing to God. We read in the Gospel: "The king went in to see the guests; and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment. And he saith to him: Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding-garment? But he was silent. Then the king saith to the waiters: Bind him hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness" (Matt. xxii. 11). The robe of sanctifying grace with which the soul presents herself to her heavenly Spouse is the robe of innocence received in Baptism. Hence the priest says to the newly baptized child: "Receive this white garment, and see that thou carry it without stain before the judgment-seat of Our Lord, Jesus Christ." This garment is one of wonderful beauty; it surpasses the nuptial garment of any worldly princess, for divine grace makes the soul beautiful beyond all comparison. A soul that is in the state of grace reflects the splendor of eternal glory and the image of the heavenly Father.

The wedding-garment of the spouse of heaven may also signify the robe of chastity; for such a one must strive to be chaste in thought, in desire, in word, and in work. She must stand before her Lord clad in the robe of innocence and purity. Purity is the pearl and crown of virtues. "O how beautiful is the chaste generation!" (Wisd. iv. 1.) Chastity of body and soul is like the fair blossom of a rose that fills the whole house with its fragrance. Purity is the lily in the garland of virtues; it raises man up to the angels. Nothing is beautiful if it lacks purity. How beautiful, then, is the garment in which the spouse of heaven is arrayed!

2. In the olden times it was customary that the spouse should meet the bridegroom with a lamp in her hand. "The kingdom of heaven shall be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish and five wise. The wise ones took oil in their vessels with the lamps" (Matt. xxv. 1, 2, 4). This golden lamp which the spouse carries is the love of God. The love of God must take complete possession of her heart. Her first thought upon awaking in the morning must be God, throughout the day she must walk before God, and at night when she retires to rest her last thought should be God. She makes an offering to God of her every action during the day, every step should be for Him; to Him she must consecrate all her exertions, all her desires, all the longings of her heart. She worships God, she hears His word with delight, and she receives the sacraments frequently. Her love of God is "strong as death, neither can the floods drown it" (Cant. viii. 6). This love of God glorifies the heart of the Christian and makes it beautiful with celestial brightness; for love is compared to a jewel, to the sun itself, and where the love of God dwells there the eye of God rests with pleasure.

The spouse of heaven must also be supplied with oil. The oil represents good works. She must bring this oil with her, and, therefore, must endeavor to be "fruitful in good works" (Col. i. 10). She accumulates merit before God from hour to hour, from minute to minute. She gains merits by patience in her daily work, by bearing cheerfully the contrarieties of life, by con-

stant union of her heart with God, by incessant contest with the enemy of her salvation, by prayers and tears, vigils and fasting. These good works are sacrificial vessels, whence the perfume of sweetest incense ascends to heaven.

You now see before you the bride of heaven in her nuptial attire, arrayed in a wedding-garment and carrying a golden lamp. In comparison with her supernatural beauty all earthly splendor is but as the last flickering of a taper compared to the full and clear light of the noon-day sun. She is "adorned with gold and silver and clothed in fine linens embroidered with many colors" (Ezech. xvi. 13). Behold what a halo of glory surrounds the bride of heaven! How little we think of it! How often young women take pleasure in dangerous amusements; they are frequently seen in the dancing-hall, they form acquaintances with people who endanger their eternal welfare; and with all this, they laugh at the idea of danger and sin until, before they are quite aware of it, they heap sin upon sin and cast away the wedding-garment which adorned them.

PART II.

1. Who is the Bridegroom of the heavenly spouse? It is the Son of God Himself. *Christus sponsus virginum.* In saying this all is said—all that is most glorious and most sublime. Jesus Christ is the noblest of bridegrooms. He is the only Son of the most exalted of monarchs, of whom it is said: "The government is upon His shoulders" (Is. ix. 6). He is the "image of the invisible God" (Col. i. 15). The name He bears is

so sublime that "in the name of Jesus every knee is bent of those that are in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Phil. ii. 10). He is the mightiest of kings. It is said of the royal bridegroom of Esther that "he reigned from India to Ethiopia over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces" (Est. i. 1). The Bridegroom of the faithful soul rules over heaven and earth. "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18). He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

He is also the richest of bridegrooms. "In His hand are all the ends of the earth, and the height of the mountains are His; the sea is His and He made it" (Ps. xciv. 4). "All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made" (John i. 3). He is the owner of all that is good, all that is beautiful and precious, whether on earth or in heaven. To Him belong the pearls in the depth of the sea, the golden treasures hidden in the rocks, all the wealth of heaven is His—all things belong to Him. He is, further, most beautiful. "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men, grace is poured abroad on Thy lips" (Ps. xliv. 3). The Son of God is "the brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance" (Heb. i. 3). Beautiful indeed is He in whom the beauty of God is found! "His face did shine as the sun" at the Transfiguration. We shall never be able to appreciate fully the happiness of the soul that can call the Son of God her Bridegroom. He is the noblest, the mightiest, the richest, the most beautiful of bridegrooms.

2. He bestows upon His chosen ones extraordinary

gifts. First of all, He gives to His bride His Heart. She possesses the whole and undivided affection of her Spouse, for He loves her with an infinite love. To a certain extent, she can exercise command over His Heart, she can ask for everything that she wishes, and she will receive it. "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive" (Matt. xxi. 22). He gives her His Heart, and He gives it forever. The human heart is unstable, it is cast about like the waves of the sea. "The things that I purpose," says the Apostle, "do I purpose according to the flesh, that there should be with me, it is, and, it is not" (2 Cor. i. 17). But the Heart of the Son of God is not changeable, it remains forever the possession of His beloved bride, unless she herself casts it from her; for His love is unchangeable and eternal. "Love is strong as death and many waters cannot quench charity; neither can the floods drown it" (Cant. viii. 6, 7).

The heavenly Spouse bestows upon the faithful soul His kingdom: "I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom" (Luke xxii. 29). This kingdom is one of infinite beauty. The banquet table of the heavenly King is always ready, spread with the choicest fruits of paradise; there all is glory and rejoicing. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). No city upon earth can be compared in beauty with the heavenly Jerusalem; there are peace, happiness, and life that knows no end. On the day of her death the heavenly Bridegroom will come and conduct His spouse into

that kingdom and place her upon a throne. "When the chief Pastor shall appear you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory" (1 Pet. v. 4). "Come from Libanus, My spouse, come from Libanus, come, thou shalt be crowned" (Cant. iv. 8).

What great privileges are given to the bride of heaven! The Heart of the Bridegroom is hers, and the kingdom of heaven is hers. What earthly fortune can be compared with this? We have considered the bride of heaven in her attire and in her happiness. Not many of you will have the good fortune to be brides of heaven in the full sense of the word, to leave the world entirely and consecrate your lives to the service of God exclusively. Many of you will embrace the married state; but I hope that some of you at least will seek the state of greater perfection. They will enjoy to the full the happiness of which I have spoken. St. Gregory says that a great reward can be obtained only by great exertions. All of you can strive after greater perfection. You can turn from the pleasures of the world; avoid dangerous dances, dangerous intimacies. You can all be pure in mind, in thought, desire, word, and deed. You can all eschew vanity in dress, and idle conversation. You can all give yourselves to prayer, and frequently approach the sacraments. If you do this, Christ will receive you as His brides and will give you the inheritance of the kingdom. Do this, and you will never regret the sacrifices you make.

4. The Child of Mary.

"*Behold thy Mother.*"—John xix. 27.

We read in Holy Scripture that Mary and John went to Mount Calvary and took their stand beneath the cross of the dying Redeemer. Our Lord amid the throes of His death-agony looked down upon them and said: "Behold thy son; behold thy Mother." The teaching of the Fathers is that by those words Our Lord confided all mankind in all ages to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin. "By these words which Our Lord uttered upon the cross, Mary was constituted not only the Mother of St. John, but the Mother of all mankind," says St. Bernard. Consequently Mary is your Mother, and you are unspeakably dear to her maternal heart. God grant that you may be good and faithful children of this best of all mothers! You would then indeed be most happy. Unfortunately some young women fancy themselves to be children of Mary whereas they are in reality far from it. To-day I intend to set before your eyes and impress upon your hearts the image of the true child of Mary. Let us consider

I. How she ought to conduct herself;
II. What she may hope for.

PART I.

1. Like her Mother, the daughter of Mary must lead a life free from sin. Mary was immaculate. Our faith teaches us that in all her life she never committed the least sin, that never did the shadow of sin fall upon her angelic soul. The Fathers are unanimous in applying to her the words: "Thou art all fair, My love, and there is not a spot in thee" (Cant. iv. 7). You, too, ought to lead a stainless life, if you would be true children of Mary; your heart ought to be a mirror wherein is reflected the purity of her heart. Do not speak to me of girls who are haughty, self-willed, disobedient; do not speak to me of such whose eyes are continually wandering about, who entertain thoughts of which they ought to be ashamed, who allow or encourage improper familiarities. Such are not true children of Mary.

Mary led a stainless life in the midst of the world. At the time when she lived, men had become very corrupt in Israel. Bad examples met her eyes, many temptations approached her, though they were all from without and not from within. Yet in spite of the corruption round about her she lived free from the least stain of sin. She is called the "lily among thorns." You, too, live in a world where the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life reign supreme; in a world where "the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." God grant that you may so walk through this world as not to be stained by sin; that, at least, you may always avoid the guilt of mortal sin. This you can do with the assistance of divine grace; this you must do

if you would be a worthy daughter of Mary immaculate. One who joins in the follies and diversions of the world does not bear the mark of Mary; such a one is not her child.

2. The child of Mary must not only imitate her Mother in sinlessness, but she must also imitate her in her virtues. There are especially three virtues that shine out pre-eminently, like three flowers from paradise, in the wreath of the Mother of God. She was, first, remarkable for her humility. Her outward appearance was humble, and her inward disposition was even more humble than her appearance. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." She who was so highly favored by heaven calls herself a handmaid, and acts as such throughout her life. If you would be a true child of Mary, let your dress be simple and your mind lowly. "Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God . . . humility" (Col. iii. 12), "not minding high things, but consenting to the humble" (Rom. xii. 16). Humility is a beautiful ornament of the soul. Do you fancy yourself a true child of Mary if you are always eager to follow the latest styles in dress, if you deck your person gaily, above your station in life, and are always ready to take offence if any one ventures to find fault with you.

Mary was remarkable for her chastity. Never has the world seen a virgin of such extraordinary purity as Mary. Her whole life was absolutely pure and undefiled, pure as refined gold; never did a single thought that was suggestive of sin cross her mind. If you would be a child of Mary, imitate her purity. "Reckon

that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. vi. 11, 12). Chastity is the lily among the virtues and raises man to the level of the angels. Do not imagine that you can be a child of Mary if you allow evil suggestions to rest in your mind, if you form intimate acquaintances with young men without the purpose of marriage.

Mary was, further, remarkable for her devotion. "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart" (Luke ii. 19). Here we behold a devout soul, absorbed in the contemplation of heavenly things. Her whole life was one continuous act of worship, of uninterrupted prayer. If you would be a true child of Mary, be diligent in devotional exercises, lift up your heart and your hands in constant prayer to God. "In all thy ways think on Him" (Prov. iii. 6). "Pray without ceasing" (Thess. v. 17). "Prayer," says St. Augustine, "is the pillar and pedestal on which all holy virtues rest; it is the foundation of faith, it is the crown of the solitary." Do not believe yourself a child of Mary if your thoughts and interests are given to the world, if you take little delight in prayer, in the services of the Church, in approaching the sacraments.

You know now how the child of Mary should conduct herself; she must walk in freedom from sin and in the light of virtue. Direct your steps in this manner; imitate the example of Mary, your Mother; live unstained by sin in a corrupt world. Walk in humility, chastity, and devotion.

PART II.

1. The true child of Mary will receive great graces from God. Mary is the treasurer and dispenser of grace. She is the mystic Tower of David, on the walls of which hung a thousand shields, that is to say, means of assistance in every danger. Of her are used the words: "In me is all hope of life and of virtue" (Ecclus. xxiv. 25). Through her intercession she obtains grace in abundance for her devout children.

She obtains for her children fortitude in the battle of life. The battle against sin is a difficult one, and is renewed from day to day; many there are who fall in it. Mary stands by the side of her children and obtains by her intercession grace for them to conquer in the sore trials of temptation. "Draw nigh to me," cries St. John Damascene, "O Mother of my Saviour. If thou art near I shall not be scorched amid the fiercest flames of temptation. I shall be safe despite a thousand snares and nets laid to entrap me. And when the winds blow and the waves of temptation run high, I shall not fear lest shipwreck befall me. Thy name is my shield, thy support is my armor, thy assistance is my sword." Countless Christians owe it to the help of the Mother of God that they passed through temptation without sin.

Mary obtains for her faithful children the power to conquer in the hour of death. When the time of dissolution approaches the enemies of our salvation make a final attack upon the heart of the Christian. This contest awaits you too; you cannot escape it; and it may prove a harder struggle than you have experienced

during your whole life. The Mother of mercy, however, does not abandon her children who have been faithful to her during their lifetime. It is a most consoling thought that at the hour of death we shall have the Mother of God to assist us. When the Queen of heaven approaches, the spirits of darkness must fly from the bedside of the Christian. Though you cannot count on the Blessed Virgin appearing to you at that hour in visible form, as she has done in the case of some of her most faithful servants; yet, if you are a true child of Mary, you can be absolutely certain that she will not forget you in the hour of need. She will then impart to you the blessing of heaven, and will not allow you to suffer defeat; and you will depart in the peace of the Lord.

How great are the graces that the child of Mary may hope for from her protectress: fortitude in the battle of life, and victory in the hour of death! But these are not all the privileges granted to the true child of Mary—she may hope for greater ones still.

2. Mary procures for her children the unspeakable joys of heaven. "Virgins," says St. Cyril, "have their portion with Mary." What is Mary's portion? "Mary hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke x. 42). Her portion is the happiness of heaven. It is "above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17). It is happiness such as "no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man to conceive" (1 Cor. ii. 9). Her portion will belong to her for all eternity. It is described as "eternal glory," as an "in-

corruptible inheritance," as "eternal life." Mary rejoices with a joy that shall never pass away; the sun of her happiness shall never set; her glory shall know no end.

Her portion will also be your portion provided you walk as true children of Mary here below; the "better part" will then be also your portion. You will walk with Mary in the garden of paradise, and will look upon the countenance of God, who is infinite beauty and infinite majesty. Who would not long for such a portion, for such happiness? This happiness will be granted to every faithful child of Mary. In this world you cannot find real happiness, even should it fall to your lot to be dressed in silks and decked with pearls and precious stones, even though you meet with the admiration and applause of the world, for "the world passeth away and the concupiscence thereof" (1 John ii. 17). When the chalice of earthly joys has been drained, tears begin to flow. In Mary you will find happiness true and secure. Resolve, therefore, from this very hour to conduct yourself as a true child of Mary, to let your life be pure and chaste, to follow her in her virtues, especially in humility, chastity, and devotion. "Most holy Virgin, take, I beseech thee, all those who are here present under thy protection. Behold how they now promise to belong to thee, to walk in thy ways all the days of their life!"

5. Where a Young Woman Should Love to Be.

THERE are many famous places of pilgrimage upon earth whose renown is spread far and wide. One of such places is the birthplace of Our Saviour at Bethlehem, where "the goodness and kindness of God, Our Saviour, appeared" (Tit. iii. 4). Another such place is Mount Calvary, "where He was offered because it was His own will" (Is. liii. 7); and where "He hath redeemed us to God in His blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Apoc. v. 9). These are holy places, venerated by all Christians, and to them countless numbers of devout people betake themselves every year. Besides these holy places which are the property of all the faithful, men have certain places which they hold sacred and where they love to be. Let me ask you to-day in what places you love to be. Perhaps some of you may feel a little embarrassed at this question, and I will not insist on an answer. I intend to-day to explain to you what places a Christian young woman ought to hold sacred, and where she ought to love to be found. These are principally two:

I. The house of God;

II. Her own room.

PART I.

1. A Christian young woman should love to dwell in the house of God, because she finds there her God. You

might ask, Can we not find God everywhere? Undoubtedly; it is a truth that cannot be denied—God is everywhere: "In Him we live and move and are" (Acts xvii. 28); "The eyes of the Lord in every place behold the good and the evil" (Prov. xv. 3). But in the house of God He is found in a special manner. There the Son of God who was made man and who ascended into heaven is really, truly and substantially present. We know that He is so present in the sacred tabernacle. There the Christian young woman can find her God, concealed under the lowly appearance of bread. Nevertheless faith enables her to see before her bodily Him who is "the image of the invisible God, the First-born of every creature" (Col. i. 15); "the beginning and the end" (Apoc. xxi. 6). There she may find Him to whom "God hath given a name, that in His name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth" (Phil. ii. 9). Thus in the church she may find her God at any time and on all occasions.

The mansions of the great and the palaces of the rich are not always open, and often a great deal of difficulty is experienced in obtaining admission to them. In the church, however, the great God of heaven and earth is ever ready to receive the visits of His children. He may be found there in the morning and at night, at every hour and every minute during the day. The doors of His palace are always wide open, and even the poorest are always welcome. The Christian young woman may find her God there at any time of the day. For this reason the church should be to her like Beth-

lehem or Calvary, Nazareth or Jerusalem, a place to go to with delight to worship God and offer Him the homage of her heart.

2. In the church she finds the means of her salvation. These are instruction in her faith. The word of God "is a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths" (Ps. cviii. 105); it is the Gospel which Christ brought, and which, if even an angel contradict, he is accursed. In the word of God the Christian finds instruction regarding the most important duties of life; the meaning of the law of God is explained; doubts and difficulties are solved. In the word of God the Christian finds strength in the conflict with evil. "The life of man is a warfare upon earth" (Job vii. 1). No one is exempt from this conflict, and it is often very severe. Yet with the strength the Christian young woman obtains before the tabernacle and in the eating of the flesh of her Saviour, she will be enabled to overcome her enemies. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him" (John vi. 57). This is the promise of Jesus; and when He takes possession of our soul He suppresses the law of sin in our members and extinguishes the passions which would draw us to sin.

The Christian young woman finds in the church the means of reconciliation with God. Every one is exposed to the danger of sin, and even the just offend frequently. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8). In the house of God we find forgiveness of our sins in the Sacrament of Penance. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse

us from all iniquity" (1 John i. 9). Our Lord said to His disciples: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them" (John xx. 23).

Finally, in the church the plenitude of all graces is to be found. There the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered up, the unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of the cross on Calvary. As grace flowed from the five wounds of Our Lord on the cross, so it now streams out upon the people from the sacrifice of the cross. St. Thomas Aquinas says that whenever the sacrifice of the Mass is offered up it is productive of the same fruits and the same profit for Christians as when the Redeemer offered Himself on the cross. Through the holy sacrifice of the Mass we can obtain from God all that we need in time and in eternity.

Thus the Christian young woman will find in the house of God all that is necessary for her salvation; she will find in it the teachings of faith; she will find strength in the hour of temptation, and reconciliation with God when she has sinned. There, too, she will find the plenitude of grace in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. This is why she looks upon the house of God as a sacred place where she loves to be. She is seen attending the instructions and sermons, she receives the sacraments regularly, and she attends Mass with devotion and recollection. On the other hand, how sad it is to see young women who have little love for the house of God, who prefer to spend their time in idle gossip, in dress, in dancing or flirtation! Still sadder it is to see a girl who never goes near the church, who is not seen approaching the sacraments, who does not care to

go to Mass; but these are not here to hear me to-day, and I can pass them over in silence.

PART II.

1. Another place where a young woman should love to be is in her own room at home. We read of Judith in the Old Testament that "she made herself a private chamber in the upper part of her house in which she abode shut up" (Jud. viii. 5). See how this famous heroine of Israel lived in her room in retirement. The Christian young woman should also love retirement, she ought to love to be at home in her own room, for there she will live in peace and happiness. For those that mix too much with the world there is much to disturb their peace of mind; the restless waves of the world's ocean wash away one bit of tranquillity after another. "O treacherous world," exclaims St. Augustine, "thou who dost promise so much that is good, but bringest us nothing but what is evil. Thou dost promise life and dost bring us death; thou dost promise joy and bringest grief; thou dost promise calm, and, behold, thou art thyself confusion; thou dost promise to be permanent and art nothing but change." In the solitude of one's room there is peace like that at the dawn of a spring morn. The secrecy of one's room is the guardian of virtue, the abode of rest, the ark of the covenant. Thomas à Kempis says: "You will find in your cell what you often sought abroad." "Shut thy door upon thee and call to thee Jesus, thy beloved. Stay

with Him in thy cell, for nowhere else wilt thou find so great peace" (Imit. i. 20).

Is not peace almost synonymous with happiness, is it not the source of the purest joy? When the heart is at peace, then one fair blossom of joy after another opens its calix. "A secure mind is like a continual feast" (Prov. xv. 15). "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord and my soul shall be joyful in my God" (Is. lxi. 10). The worldling who drinks in the turbid waters of the pleasures of earth does not comprehend what the true happiness of a peaceful mind is. Listen to St. Bernard: "In comparison with the celestial joys all other rejoicing is as mourning, every delight is only sorrow, all that appears sweet is bitter, all beauty is mere deformity; in a word, all else is irksome and tedious."

The pious young woman may well look upon her room as a sanctuary where peace and joy may be found. Whilst the votary of the world runs to festivities and social gatherings, hastens from one entertainment to another, and loses the peace of her mind, her pious sister remains at home, stays in her own room, occupied in reading, prayer, and work, and in her occupation enjoys the greatest happiness.

2. There is another chamber which the young woman should consider sacred—her own heart. This she ought to consecrate wholly to God. All the thoughts, the yearnings of her soul should have the love of God for their object; in her work, her sufferings, her struggles, her intention should be directed to God. In the innermost recesses of her heart should be inscribed in letters of gold these words: "My beloved

to me, and I to Him." And in order to prevent anything that is unsanctified from entering into the heart which she has dedicated to God, she should surround it with a double barrier. She must surround her heart with the wall of Christian vigilance; she must watch over her thoughts, her words, over every impulse of the heart, following the admonition of Holy Scripture: "With all watchfulness keep thy heart" (Prov. iv. 23). Nothing should be allowed to enter that could be displeasing to God. The second barrier is a hedge of thorns, by which I mean Christian mortification. She must deny her senses many things for which they crave, she must make sacrifices. She must "bring her body into subjection." In this manner she must take care that the sanctuary of her heart remain undefiled, that it be not polluted, after being dedicated to the Most High.

The Christian young woman should further decorate the sanctuary of her heart. In the center is to be placed a lamp which betokens the light of faith. As a lamp illumines the house, so should faith enlighten the soul of the Christian. She must believe with her whole heart, in all simplicity and cheerfulness. Around the lamp are to be placed certain fragrant flowers; the rose of charity, the lily of purity, and the violet of humility. The soul of a Christian young woman is indeed a sacred place, almost as sacred as the church. In this sanctuary God Himself dwells, and pours out His blessings.

You have now seen what places ought to be sacred for you, and where you ought to love to be found. Is the church a place that you love to visit; have you made

your room at your father's house a sanctuary; have you transformed your heart into a fit dwelling-place for God? If so, you are indeed to be called happy, you are indeed rich, no matter how poor you may be in this world's goods.

6. A Most Glorious Victory.

WHEN a general has gained a decisive victory over the enemy, there are great rejoicings in the conqueror's country. Flags are displayed, bells are rung, triumphal arches are erected. In reality there is generally more cause for weeping than for rejoicing. Think of all the victory has cost! How many brave hearts have shed the last drop of blood, how many fair hopes have been destroyed, how many families are overwhelmed with grief! There are, however, victories of another nature, such as the Christian gains, victories which do the Christian all honor, and which require no shedding of blood, no grief, nor mourning. Job says "the life of man on earth is a warfare" (vii. 1). We are all in a country where a continual battle must be fought. God grant that our military service may be crowned with victory, with a most brilliant victory. This is the subject upon which I would speak to you to-day; it is one deserving of close attention. We shall consider

I. In what this victory consists;
II. How it is gained.

PART I.

Your most brilliant victory is the victory over your own heart. These words may convey little meaning to

your mind, but I will explain them more fully. We are told that "the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21). The human heart is the abode of pride, of self-will, of love of the world, of impurity; wild beasts and armed foes have their dwelling-place in the heart. "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies" (Matt. xv. 19). You now understand what conquest over your own heart means; it consists in overcoming your sinful propensities and evil passions. This victory is the most glorious that you can achieve.

1. The victory requires a constant conflict. The longer and the harder the battle the more glorious is the victory. No one will be tempted to dispute this fact. The conflict which we have to wage with our own heart is a difficult one. The evil concupiscence which is inborn is a stubborn enemy. St. Paul laments bitterly over the dominion exercised over his soul by his lower nature, so much so that he even desires death as a means of release from it. "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 23, 24.) The Fathers and theologians of the Church also represent concupiscence as a terrible enemy. St. Ambrose says: "Evil concupiscence is the promoter of vice. It is the parent of transgressions, the preceptress in the art of wrong-doing, the mainspring of injustice, the directress of malice, the destroyer of virtue, the instigator of

rebellion, the source of scandal." Your own experience may have taught you something of the fierceness of the struggles that arise in your soul, and how alluring are the enticements that are offered by sin. Hence it is true that the struggle against one's own heart is of a difficult character, and that it is no uncommon occurrence for heroes who have overcome cities and nations to fall ignominiously a prey to their own evil inclinations.

The warfare with our own heart is also a long one. History knows of sieges that have lasted for years, but the war which we must wage upon ourselves lasts during our whole lifetime. As soon as the child comes to the age of reason the warfare begins, and only with the last breath can the aged veteran lay down the sword. The words of the Apostle: "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured" (James i. 14), are true of every man, no matter what his age may be. As long as our heart continues to beat, as long as a drop of blood circulates in our veins, the enemy will not rest. Hence we must fight in youth and in old age, every day and every hour of the day, until death lays his hand upon us and the throbbing of the heart ceases forever. Thus the victory over ourselves is a most glorious one, since the conflict is so severe and lasts all the days of our life.

2. The laurels we win in this conflict are of wonderful splendor. In olden times a wreath, the leaves of which were of pure gold, was awarded to the conqueror who had distinguished himself on the battle-field. The crown which God gives us if we come out victorious

from the struggle is infinitely more precious. "When the Prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory" (1 Pet. v. 4). A "crown of glory"—what a delightful prospect! The laurel wreath which decks the brow of the hero of the battle-field withers and decays, but the triumphal crown which God gives to His heroes can never wither or decay, its luster can never be dimmed. It is spoken of as "the crown of life": "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life" (James i. 12). "Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Apoc. ii. 10). "You shall receive a never-fading crown of glory" (1 Pet. v. 4).

What a magnificent reward is here held out to us! What conclusion are we to draw from this? If God promises to them that overcome their own desires a crown of glory which can never fade or decay, an imperishable crown, and not only promises it, but actually bestows it upon them as soon as they have conquered, it follows as a natural consequence that God must regard such a victory as a great achievement. It is a most glorious victory.

PART II.

1. The victory over our own heart must be achieved by God's grace. The heretic Pelagius maintained that the victory could be gained by our own strength. The Church has condemned his teaching as false and heretical, and has expressly declared that divine grace is absolutely necessary if we would do anything worthy

of salvation. God, in His infinite mercy, never allows His assistance to be wanting to us, but still we must implore it of Him if we wish to receive it in abundance.

"Ask, and it shall be given to you" (Matt. vii. 7). "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive" (Matt. xxi. 22). These are grand promises, and they will most certainly be fulfilled. Therefore pray for grace to conquer. Pray with fervor and with firm confidence. Pray daily—I might say pray hourly. If you are able to go to Mass on week-days, do not fail to do so; for prayer offered up in union with the divine sacrifice will surely be heard. Mind above all things that you pray in the hour of temptation, and your petition at such a time will certainly be received in heaven.

You must further go to holy communion frequently. Our Lord, in His infinite compassion for poor weak mortals, instituted this wonderful sacrament to give them strength when wearied in the strife and hard-pressed by the enemy. In this sacrament we are nourished and strengthened by the flesh of the Son of God. A frequent and worthy reception is undoubtedly the best means given us for conquering in our struggle against sin and temptation. When Jesus takes hold of our soul, we are safe against the assaults of the devil and his allies. Therefore we must frequently approach the holy table and receive the heavenly Manna.

2. Our own free will must co-operate with divine grace in the warfare which we are waging. Just as the rain from heaven does not produce the fruit alone, but must fall on good soil, so divine grace requires our co-

operation. Effort is, therefore, required on your part. In the first place, you must be on your guard against evil. A soldier who stands face to face with the enemy and yet pays no heed to him, or perhaps goes to sleep at his post, will soon be overcome. In like manner, a Christian who is not constantly on the lookout will soon become a prey to the enemy within him. Hence the countless admonitions given to us to watch: "Watch ye that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41). "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). Be ever on your guard, watch over your heart; watch every hour of the day, watch every day of your life.

A brave warrior makes good use of his weapons in the fight, and thus drives back the enemy. The Christian must likewise offer a firm resistance to the seduction of his heart. "Follow not the desires of thy heart," says the Wise Man (Ecclus. v. 2). "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. vi. 12). Resist the evil impulses of your heart valiantly; resist the first movement to anger, to self-will, to disobedience, to pride, to impurity.

The most glorious victory of the Christian, as you have seen, consists in conquering self, in overcoming one's passions and inclinations to evil. It consists in this, that you convert an evil heart into a good one, that you change a proud heart into a humble one, an impure, perverse heart into a chaste and docile one. It consists in this—that you make a heart that loves the world turn from it to God. This is the best and most praiseworthy victory that the Christian can gain; it is

achieved only after a constant and protracted struggle, but its reward is a crown of glory that can never fade. The means of obtaining the victory are, in the first place, the grace of God, but your own co-operation is also necessary. Strive, all of you, to win this victory. It is more glorious than any victory ever obtained on earth by the greatest of generals, and will obtain for you a richer reward than if, sword in hand, you had subdued the whole earth to your sway. See that you do your part; God's grace will not be wanting to you. Be on your guard against the enemy and resist temptation. Be diligent in prayer and fortify yourselves with the Bread of the strong. God will most assuredly help you to achieve this wonderful victory. And when you are called upon to account for the manner in which you have fought, you will be able to say with St. Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me" (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8).

7. The Bread of Life.

"*I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever.*"—John vi. 51, 52.

In the middle of the earthly paradise there stood a wonderful tree, the "tree of life." "The Lord brought forth of the ground all manner of trees fair to behold and pleasant to eat of; the tree of life also in the midst of paradise" (Gen. ii. 9). When our first parents transgressed the law of God they were driven from paradise and an angel with a flaming sword in his hand was stationed at the entrance to guard the way to the tree of life and to prevent them from approaching it. Since that hour no mortal eye has seen it and no hand has been stretched out to pluck its fruit. The divine Redeemer who came to repair all the harm done by sin has given us something that more than compensates for the loss of the tree of life. This is the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. As the fruit of immortality hung upon the tree of life, so in this adorable sacrament immortality is given to us. This is the true Bread of life; since

I. It is given to us by the King of life;
II. It contains the food of immortality.

PART I.

1. The Holy Eucharist was instituted by Christ, the King of life. Jesus says of Himself: "I am the life"; and St. John testifies of Him: "This is the true God and life eternal" (1 John v. 20). He did indeed submit to death for our sake, but after three days He rolled back the stone that enclosed Him and returned to life. "For to this end Christ died and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom. xiv. 9). "He dieth now no more" (*ibid.* vi. 9). Christ is truly the Lord of life, and as such, He has instituted the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the banquet of immortality.

Look into the cenacle at Jerusalem. On the eve of His Passion He assembled His apostles around Him and celebrated the Pasch with them; and at the end of the supper He instituted the Blessed Sacrament. "Whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave to His disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is My body. And taking the chalice He gave thanks: and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is My blood" (Matt. xxvi. 26-28). Such is the account of the institution of this sacrament. It was in the cenacle at Jerusalem that this great mystery was offered for the first time. Let us now turn our eyes to the altar.

In virtue of the authority and power conferred upon him by Christ, the Catholic priest goes to the altar every morning and offers the holy sacrifice of the Mass. In the same manner as Our Lord, he takes bread and wine in his hands, and says in Our Lord's name: "This

is My body—this is the chalice of My blood." Thus the sacrifice instituted at the last supper is repeated and renewed from day to day in every part of the world. With the eyes of faith the Catholic sees there upon the altar the Redeemer, the King of life, present under the appearance of bread and wine. "By the words of consecration," says St. Augustine, "the bread becomes the flesh of Christ."

2. Jesus invites all to this banquet of immortality. Who is He who invites us, and who are we whom He invites? He is "the High Priest over the house of God" (Heb. x. 21), "The Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8), whereas we are "rottenness and the filth of dust" (Job vii. 5), "sorrow and misery" (Ecclus. ii. 23). Such are the terms used in Holy Scripture. And yet Our Lord condescends to the extent of inviting us to His table. A God deigns to sup with us; the Creator with the creature, the King of immortality with the offspring of dust. What inconceivable magnanimity!

He invites us to His banquet without distinction. Only nobles and distinguished persons are invited to the table of princes. It is a most rare occurrence when a man of the people is asked to dine with a king. Yet Our Lord says: "Come ye all." Is it possible that all are to come? Yes, so it is; even the poor, prisoners, servants, laborers, mendicants; all without distinction are invited and are welcome at the Lord's table. "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city; and bring in hither the poor and the feeble and the blind and the lame" (Luke xiv. 21). The King invites all to come, and all that He requires of them is a heart free

from grievous sin. This is the only condition placed to their coming; for if any one approaches the banquet of immortality in sin the medicine will turn into poison, the Bread of life will become a deadly morsel for him. (Read 1 Cor. xi. 27-30.)

The supper of the Lord is truly a banquet of life. The Lord of life has prepared it, and He invites all to partake of it. This ought to be a sufficient motive for you to approach this banquet frequently. Poverty, infirmity, are no excuse; the Lord looks not to these things, but to the disposition of the heart.

PART II.

1. Holy communion is truly the banquet of life, because it gives us the life of grace. Here below we are pilgrims; the goal of our journey sheds its light down upon us from the heavens above; it is the glorious city, the heavenly Jerusalem, toward which we are traveling. If our earthly pilgrimage is to lead us to this end, it is essential that we keep ourselves in the state of grace, that is to say, in the love and friendship of God. One of the most powerful means to this end is found in holy communion. It gives us strength when we grow faint on the way.

The bread with which Elias was strengthened when he was about to faint on his journey is a type of holy communion. "He arose, and ate, and drank, and walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights, unto the mount of God, Horeb" (3 Kings xix. 8). We, too, must travel through a desert, and on the way we often get so weak and feeble that our

spiritual life is nearly exhausted. How often we feel so! All delight in heavenly things is gone, our soul seems dried and parched like the earth where no rain has fallen for weeks; our soul is withered like a flower that has been exposed for days to the scorching sun. We are almost inclined to think that we have lost entirely the life of grace, at least we fear lest we shall soon be deprived of it. It is at such times that holy communion imparts new life to us, and keeps us from fainting by the wayside. "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28). One worthy holy communion is sufficient to raise our failing spirits and quicken the life of the soul, so that it will again be renewed like a meadow after the rain. We then feel the truth of the words: "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). "If languor comes over thee," says St. Cyril, "and causes thee to feel so apathetic that thou canst neither meditate upon the eternal truths of religion nor even pray orally; then fortify thyself with the body of Christ, and thou wilt soon see thy devotion revive."

The Christian should partake of holy communion as a remedy against daily infirmities. Countless enemies, inspired with hatred against God and His creatures, lie in wait for us on our journey through the wilderness of this life. We of ourselves are extremely weak. "All flesh is as grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of grass" (1 Pet. i. 24). Grass is lightly trodden under foot and the flower destroyed. You here before me especially are in great danger. Yet the Saviour offers you the strength of the armor of God, "that you may

be able to resist in the evil day and to stand in all things perfect" (Ephes. vi. 13). This armor is holy communion. It is said of those who abide under the protection of the Most High: "A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee. Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk, and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon" (Ps. xc. 7, 30). Thus it shall be with us, when Jesus enters our heart in holy communion. "When Jesus Christ takes possession of us, He suppresses the perverse law in our members, stifles the flames of our passions and heals our wounds." St. Chrysostom says that they who before were timid are by holy communion rendered bold as lions, and that the spirits of hell tremble when they behold the lips of the Christian reddened by the blood of the Lord. Experience confirms the truth of these words. The weak are strengthened, so much so that they are able to withstand all the assaults of their enemies and to make rapid progress in the life of grace.

2. Holy communion also makes us partakers of life everlasting. Eternal life is the fruit of the adorable Sacrament of the Altar. Listen to Our Lord's words: "This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it, he may not die. I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give, is My flesh for the life of the world. Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh, and

drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day. This is the Bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this Bread, shall live forever" (John vi. 50-60). The Doctors of the Church proclaim the same truth. "Jesus Christ gives His sacred flesh to our flesh, and incorporates us in Himself that we may share His immortality" (St. Cyril).

Thus the Lord's supper is truly a life-giving food, since it sustains our spiritual life and makes us partake of life eternal. Accordingly those persons who are really in earnest about religion are often seen at the Lord's table. Do you act in this manner, Christian young women? If you would maintain in you the life of grace you must frequently renew it with the body and blood of Christ. How sad it is when young women seem to have no taste for the Bread of life! Such will soon fall from the state of grace, if they are still in it. How often are you to receive holy communion? This often depends largely on circumstances. As far as a rule can be laid down, I would advise you all to receive holy communion at least once a month; and I would encourage you to receive it still more frequently. But to receive Our Lord so often requires as an absolute condition that you strive to eliminate from your life every thing that may hinder the fruits of holy communion. Let no one think that she can be a monthly communicant without breaking off every dangerous association, without ridding herself of vanity, of uncharitableness in her conversation, of disobedience to-

ward her parents and superiors. "You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of the devil" (1 Cor. x. 2). Away, then, with every thing that is displeasing to God! Only when you have cleansed your soul from all sin, only when you are willing to remove every occasion of sin, will Jesus welcome you at His table. And to be a monthly visitor at His banquet, He expects from you more than mere freedom from mortal sin; He expects from you an endeavor to rid yourself from all affection for sin, and the assiduous cultivation of virtues pleasing to Him.

8. Lessons from the Rose.

"*I was exalted like a rose-plant in Jericho.*"—Ecclus. xxiv. 18.

OUR divine Saviour bids us look at the flowers of the field and consider them attentively. "Consider," He says, "the lilies of the field how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these" (Matt. vi. 28, 29). Even the smallest, the most insignificant flower that grows by the wayside proclaims to us the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God, and with mute eloquence exhorts us to render our tribute of praise to the Most High. "Wonderful are Thy works" (Ps. cxxxviii. 14). We may learn many a lesson from the flowers; for if we consider them thoughtfully, we shall not only admire the omnipotence and wisdom of the Creator, but we can also learn from them what we must do to please Him. I invite you to-day to linger a while with me among the flowers; and I will select one from amongst them, and point out to you what lessons we can learn from it. The flower which I will select is the rose. We shall consider

I. Its beauty;
II. Its thorns;
III. Its perishable nature.

PART I.

1. You become most like the rose, which is called the queen among flowers on account of its beauty, by having your souls adorned with the choicest graces and virtues. God confers many graces upon men, whereby their souls become beautiful in His sight. Consider the graces given in Baptism. The newly baptized child shines with all the radiance of heaven. "Ye were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord," says St. Paul (Ephes. v. 8). Consider further the Sacrament of Penance. All stains of sin are removed, and the penitent is again adorned with sanctifying grace and the virtues that accompany it. "They shall be white as snow" (Is. i. 18). God bestows special graces on the pure of heart, and advances to meet them with the tenderest love. God, it is true, loves the meek, the humble, the docile, the peaceable, but He loves with an especial love the pure of heart. He chose a Virgin to be His Mother. With the pure of heart He enters into an intimate relationship, and chooses them as His spouses. He is the Bridegroom of virgins.

God favors the chaste with His special blessings. It is true, He blesses the whole world: "Thou openest Thy hand and fillest every living being with benediction" (Ps. cxliv. 16). But He reserves a very special blessing to the pure. To them He grants a wonderful enlightenment and outpouring of grace. He protects them in time of danger with His powerful hand. "When thou shalt pass through the waters, I shall be with thee, and the rivers shall not cover thee; when thou shalt walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, and

the flames shall not burn in thee" (Is. xliii. 2). Thus the chaste soul flourishes as a lovely rose in the garden of God, for she is endowed with the choicest graces and

2. Is most beautiful in the sight of God. "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men" (Wisd. iv. 1). "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). This is also the teaching of the Doctors of the Church. "O chastity," exclaims St. Ephrem, "thou source of eternal riches, who dost blossom in body and soul as a beauteous rose, filling the whole dwelling with fragrance! thou art a precursor of the Holy Spirit." And St. Francis de Sales says: "Chastity is the lily in the bouquet of virtues, and raises man almost to an equality with the angels. It has a special dignity, peculiar to itself, that of being the fairest of the virtues of body and soul."

The Church teaches the same, when she extols virginity and requires it for a life consecrated to the special service of God in the sacerdotal and religious state.

Behold the beauty of the rose—do you love it as you should? Are your thoughts, words, and actions pure? Hold purity in high esteem and safeguard it with all vigilance. "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." Be careful, lest the beautiful leaves of the rose wither and die.

PART II.

1. The rose has thorns to teach us the necessity of Christian severity. You must exercise a certain severity in two respects; first, toward yourselves. We are all inclined to evil. "The imagination and thought of man are evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21). "I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is in my flesh, that which is good" (Rom. vii. 18). "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured" (James i. 13). There are times when the temptations of the flesh are extremely strong and the danger of yielding to them is close at hand. At such times take the thorns of Christian severity and plunge them deep into your soul. Remember what the Scripture says: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. xi. 12). Remember also the doom of those who succumb: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). Confront your rising passions with determination, and say: "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9.)

You must, further, observe Christian severity toward others. There are many silly and unprincipled persons who take delight in leading astray the innocent. When you meet with such, you must use severity and not allow yourself to be beguiled by silly talk. Preserve Christian gravity when improper conversation is used in your presence; do not encourage it by a smile. Be courageous and not cowardly in the presence of such evil-talkers. Preserve Christian seriousness in the pres-

ence of the flatterer, or when undue familiarity is pressed upon you. You would struggle against a wild beast or against danger to your bodily life; why should you fear to resist those who attempt to take from you a treasure more valuable than life itself? Many have made shipwreck of their innocence because they did not resist the beginnings of evil.

2. The thorns of the rose further remind us of Christian mortification. This is absolutely necessary for you, if you would follow in the footsteps of Christ. Jesus chose pain and grief for His portion upon earth, and throughout His whole life His way lay through thorny paths. Thorns pierced His soul in the crib of Bethlehem, in the carpenter's home at Nazareth, in His journeys through Judea and Galilee, on Mount Olivet. Finally, the barbarian Roman soldiers wove a crown of thorns and pressed it on His sacred brow. "Jesus, Our Lord, so long as He lived was not a single hour without the pain of His Passion" (Imit. ii. 12). It is only just that you who wish to follow Him should also walk through thorny paths and practise Christian mortification. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (Matt. xvi. 24). The bride of Christ "follows the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Consequently she must walk in the thorny paths in which He walked.

The thorns serve as a protection to the rose, shielding her from being trampled down by beasts or plucked roughly by men. The thorns of mortification are a bulwark against temptation. Tear down this protection and the rose will not last long. "It is impossible," says

St. Alphonsus, "that one remain faithful to Christ if he gives full rein to his senses. One cannot preserve purity except by hedging it round with the thorns of mortification."

Go forward, therefore, on the rough path of self-denial. Hold aloof from pleasures that prove an enticement to sin for you, avoid dances, dangerous company, vanity in dress, and the other dangers that surround you. "Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent" (Ecclus. xxi. 2). Mortify your eyes, your ears, your palate, your heart. "Mortify your members which are upon the earth" (Col. iii. 5).

PART III.

The rose blossoms but a short time, and then falls to the ground, petal by petal. It is carried away by the wind, and nothing but the stem is left. "The flower falleth off and the beauty of the shape thereof perisheth" (James i. 11). What are we to learn from the perishableness of the rose? It reminds us

1. That beauty is evanescent. "The glory of the flesh is like the flower of the grass" (1 Pet. i. 24). Beauty fades away before this life is over. How soon the rosy color leaves the cheek of the young! A few summers pass and the round fresh face is covered with wrinkles. "All flesh shall fade as grass and as the leaf that springeth out on a green tree" (Ecclus. xiv. 18). In the morning the flower of the field opens bright and fair, in the evening it is withered, and gathered into the barn. How soon disease will disfigure the countenance! Death comes, and all beauty disappears. The

eyes of the dying become glazed, the lips livid, and an ashy pallor overspreads the cheeks. The ruthless hand of death wipes all beauty from the face of man and stamps it with the seal of loathsomeness. Remember the conversion of St. Francis Borgia, when he stood beside the bier of Isabella of Spain.

Personal beauty is indeed a most perishable possession. Yet many a young woman is proud of it, and imagines in the haughtiness of her soul that all must worship her as a goddess. But there is something still sadder. There are some that employ the beauty of countenance for evil purposes, and become a source of sin to others. "Many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and thereby lust is enkindled as a fire" (Ecclus. ix. 9).

2. The perishable nature of the rose, further, reminds us of the shortness of our life. The life of the rose is brief, oftentimes lasting but a day. Man's life is equally fleeting. "Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries" (Job xiv. 1, 2). "As a drop of water of the sea, and as a pebble of the sand, so are a few years compared with eternity" (Ecclus. xviii. 8). Our life resembles the green herbs which appear to-day in all their freshness, and on the morrow are withered away. Many a one seems full of vigor, and health, and in a few days is turned into a corpse. Yet many squander the few days of their life in frivolity and vanity, in dancing and amusements, without a thought of the life to come hereafter.

Forget not the lessons which the rose teaches you. Let this flower be a reminder of the beauty of the soul

in the friendship of God, and do not mar it by the hideousness of sin. Let the thorns remind you of Christian severity toward yourselves and toward those that would lead you astray; let them remind you of Christian mortification. Be earnest and stern in times of temptation. Deny yourselves for the sake of Jesus who suffered for us. Let the fragile and perishable nature of the rose remind you of the transitoriness of earthly beauty and of the shortness of human existence. Do not attach too much value to perishable things, but look upon this life as valuable only to obtain the eternal happiness of the life to come.

9. The Young Woman's True Ornament.

"*Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel, but the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit.*"—1 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

THE world looks only to that which is externally attractive and pleasing to the senses. "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life" (1 John ii. 16). Before God all this is worth nothing; nay more, it is rather an abomination in His holy sight. Hence the Apostle says: "Be not conformed to this world, but be reformed in the newness of your mind; that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God" (Rom. xii. 2). I exhort you not to set your affections on external beauty, for this is deceptive. Strive to acquire the true adornment, the spiritual ornament of grace and virtue. This is true gold and pure silver, its value surpasses all that is considered precious by the world. Let us to-day consider what the ornament of a Christian young woman is:

I. Not external beauty; but
II. Inward holiness.

PART I.

1. The true ornament of a Christian young woman is not beauty of person. Physical beauty is no doubt a gift of God, who is the Creator of man. "Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh; Thou hast put me together with bones and sinews" (Job x. 11). Since personal beauty is a gift of God, it should be recognized as such and thanks should be given Him for it; but we must remember that it is generally a short-lived gift. It is said of man: "He cometh forth as a flower and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state" (Job xiv. 2). What is more perishing than a flower, and what more fleeting than a shadow? And if the whole life of man is compared to a flower and a shadow, how much more true is this of personal beauty, since its duration extends but over a few years of his youth? Scarcely is the age of thirty reached when the prime of physical strength and beauty is past; the sun has crossed the meridian and is on the decline toward evening. "All flesh shall fade as grass" (Ecclus. xiv. 18). Think of some old lady with whom you are acquainted; a few years ago she was young and beautiful as you. A peculiar curse seems to rest on beauty of person, so evanescent it is. Other things that men value remain in their possession much longer, such as health and riches, but personal beauty vanishes soon. "Favor is deceitful and beauty vain" (Prov. xxxi. 30). "All is vanity."

Besides being transitory, beauty is often a dangerous possession. It is dangerous to the possessor, for it gives rise to pride and vanity. Women consider a hand-

some face more valuable than other gifts, and think that they are not sufficiently admired. But if we could look into the heart of many a young woman, how often we should see there the odious demon of self-complacency and vanity! "There is a generation whose eyes are lofty, and their eyelids lifted up on high" (Prov. xxx. 13). Beauty is a dangerous gift because it exposes the possessor to many temptations from without. Hundreds of snares are laid for her to entice her from the path of virtue. Think of the beautiful Susanna. It is also a source of danger to others. The Wise Man gives this counsel to young men: "Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not about on another's beauty. For many have perished by the beauty of woman, and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire" (Ecclus. ix. 8, 9). "Women make wise men to fall off" (Ecclus. xix. 2).

Thus, you see that physical beauty is a perishable and dangerous possession, and can, for this reason, not be your true adornment. Consequently do not attach too much value to it, but rather seek your adornment in that which cannot perish and has permanent value.

2. The Christian young woman's true ornament is not found in dress. Beautiful clothes, judged in the light of faith, count for nothing. The Holy Spirit warns women against vanity in dress: "Women also in decent apparel, adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety, not with plaited hair or gold, or pearls, or costly attire" (1 Tim. ii. 2, 9). In the Old Testament, Almighty God threatens women who dress vainly: "In that day the Lord will take away the ornaments of

shoes and little moons and chains and necklaces and bracelets and bonnets and jewels hanging from the forehead" (Is. iii. 18, 24). The Fathers of the Church speak in a like manner. They tell us that excessive ornamentation is indicative of frivolity or of lack in moral sense; and that women who consider dress of the first importance generally consider virtue of the least importance. St. Chrysostom says: "Those who go about in silk and purple cannot honestly put on Christ. Those who are decked in gold and pearls have lost the chief ornament of the soul."

Splendor of dress counts for nothing in the eyes of sensible people. No one who judges of things in the right way puts much confidence in fine clothes. Undue care of dress denotes an empty mind, which takes delight only in bright colors. Besides, it is well known that some women spend all they have on clothes and finery, and lay nothing by for the day of need. Servants especially who dress too richly are objects of ridicule or pity rather than of admiration. Good clothes are not the best ornament for the Christian young woman; on the contrary, pious girls consider it a disgrace to be dressed above their station in life. "I abominate the sight of pride and glory" (Esth. xiv. 16).

PART II.

"Your adorning let it be the hidden man of the heart." Such is the Apostle's counsel; and indeed in the heart all true ornament is to be sought. "All the glory of the king's daughter is within" (Ps. xliv. 14).

This inward beauty consists in three things; the first of which is

1. A peaceful spirit. St. Peter speaks of the incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit. What does this consist in? It consists in a spirit that does not pour itself out upon external frivolities, but always observes the rules of propriety and decorum. It is a spirit that does not delight in gossip and foolish conversation, and is willing to keep silent when it is proper to be so. It is a spirit that holds aloof from dubious friendships, from dangerous companions and amusements. It is a spirit that loves the solitude of one's own room. How beautiful in the sight of heaven is a young woman that has this spirit of calm and quiet! Ask yourselves whether you have this ornament. "Go out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord. And I will receive you, and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My daughters" (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18). Seek solitude; do your work in such manner that you may have a time of quiet for yourselves. Set apart some place where you can find shelter from the storms of the world, and can calm down the agitation caused by the troubles and responsibilities that weigh upon you. In your intercourse with others be polite and kind to all, but avoid idle talking that may damage the reputation of others.

2. The second inner adornment is a humble mind. This is one that does not boast of its own perfections, nor look down upon any one else as inferior to itself. Such a soul abhors display and ostentation, she loves simplicity in dress and deportment. She blushes at

praise bestowed upon her, and gives glory to God for every good done. Such a one loves to obey and is content with the humblest accommodations and the least comfort. She is ready to acknowledge a fault or mistake, and does not take offence at rebuke and correction. Adorn yourselves with this ornament—it is beautiful before God and men. "Humble thyself in all things and thou shalt find grace before God" (Ecclus. iii. 20). "He is humble who esteems himself as nothing and is well pleased to be despised by others. To the humble man God inclines Himself; to the humble He gives much grace. He sweetly draws him to Himself and reveals to him His secrets" (Imit. ii. 2). "Glory shall uphold the humble of spirit" (Prov. xxix. 23).

3. The third requisite is a chaste heart. A chaste heart is one which watches vigilantly over the senses and divests itself of every impure inclination. It is a heart that abominates immodest conversation and resents with indignation improper familiarity. It is a heart that takes alarm at the least shadow of impropriety and is pure whether alone or with others. How pleasing to God is one pure of heart! Adorn yourselves with this ornament from heaven. "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. vi. 12). "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. iv. 3). St. Cyril says: "Let us recognize the splendor of chastity. It is the crown of angels, it is a superhuman perfection." Sin is committed easily, but the consequences of sin remain; let us be on our guard against it. They that persevere shall have their portion with the Virgin Mother, Mary.

You have now heard what your real ornament is. "Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel, but the hidden man of the heart." God grant that you may adorn yourselves with that threefold ornament of which we have spoken: a peaceful, quiet spirit, a humble mind, and a chaste heart. Do not put your trust in personal beauty, nor in the wearing of fine dresses. This ornamentation is of little value. Put on the inner adornment, and you will belong to the true nobility, the nobility of God; then you will be truly beautiful and worthy of admiration; you will be dressed in beautiful garments, even though your outward appearance be one of poverty.

10. The Virtue of Modesty.

"Women adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety."—1 Tim. ii. 9.

THE Apostle of the Gentiles enjoins upon woman the obligation of modesty: "Let women adorn themselves with modesty and sobriety." St. Bernard, writing about this virtue, says: "Modesty is a shining jewel that imparts radiance to the countenance; it is a search-light discovering what is discreditable to the soul; it is the witness of innocence, the glory of a pure conscience, the guardian of a good name, and the characteristic of an honest heart." It behooves you above all others to practise this virtue, for it is one that should be peculiarly your own, the crown of your sex. God takes delight in a modest young woman and the angels look down with pleasure upon her. I shall speak to you to-day upon this virtue:

I. In what does it consist?

II. How does God regard it?

PART I.

1. Modesty requires that you observe decorum as regards yourself; and for this purpose your thoughts must, first of all, be modest. There are thoughts which are displeasing to God but give delight to the devil. These are thoughts of impurity. "Evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xv. 26). Bad

thoughts are an evil plant which the devil puts into our hearts with the hope that evil deeds may spring from it. When evil thoughts enter your soul, cast them out at once, as you would shake a spark of fire from your clothing. Cry to Jesus and Mary, invoke their holy names. Not only repel evil thoughts quickly, but banish the memory of the temptation from your mind, and pray to the Lord for the assistance of His divine grace.

Be modest in your desires. Not only do evil thoughts arise in your mind, but evil desires try to gain a footing in your soul. Look upon them as hideous toads that creep through a garden full of flowers. Impure lust is the guide to iniquity, the destroyer of virtue, a boundless source of scandal. Prove yourselves pure when evil desires arise in your souls; oppose them promptly; repel them with prayer and determined resolutions; say: I will not consent. "Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will. If thou give thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies" (Ecclus. xviii. 30, 31). "Let not sin reign in your mortal body so as to obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. vi. 12).

Be modest in your actions. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which are you" (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17). How noble, how great a thing is the body of a Christian, since it is the temple of God! Do not desecrate this temple by evil deeds. An unchaste act is like an ugly spot on a clean garment, like a conflagration which will destroy the

temple of God. Be modest at all times—in the morning when you rise, in the evening when you retire, during the day. Remember that chastity is like a tender flower, which is easily killed.

2. Be modest in your association with others. In the first place, it behooves you to keep a watch over your eyes; refrain from letting your eyes wander about unguardedly, lest you have occasion to say: "My eye hath wasted my soul" (Lam. iii. 5). "If thy eye be single, thy whole body will be lightsome" (Luke xi. 34). Be careful to watch over your ears; much evil enters by this channel, jokes and filthy language are only too common. Be on your guard, and do not listen to such language, for it corrupts the mind and heart. "Hedge in thy ears with thorns, and hear not a wicked tongue" (Ecclus. xxviii. 28). Let the love of modesty induce you to avoid associating with the unprincipled and the shameless who hold nothing sacred and worthy of respect.

Be careful to set a watch upon your tongue. Refrain from talking and joking in a free and flighty manner, especially with men. "Melt down thy gold and silver and make a balance for thy words and a just bridle for thy mouth" (Ecclus. xxviii. 29). "Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth, but that which is good to the edification of faith" (Ephes. iv. 23). Finally, be modest in dress. Ostentation in dress is not only vulgar, but it is also a sign that pious dispositions no longer rule the heart. It often indicates that an immodest spirit has taken up his abode there. Let your dress be unassuming: "Women also in decent apparel,

adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety" (1 Tim. ii. 9). Do not follow the fashion if it is indecent and unsuited to your rank in life.

You know now wherein modesty consists; it remains for you to practise this virtue. Guard your senses, and avoid the danger that threatens you. "Where there is no hedge, the possession shall be spoiled" (Ecclus. xxxvi. 37). Where there is no modesty, there chastity cannot long endure.

PART II.

1. Modesty is a virtue which God loves to behold. Let us consider two points: first, who God is. He is the purest and holiest of beings. The beams of light which the sun sheds upon earth are pure, but God is infinitely purer. The snow which covers the earth in winter is pure, but God is incomparably purer than the snow. He is, besides, the holiest of beings. We read in the Scriptures that the angels sing without ceasing: "Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord of hosts" (Is. vi. 3). "God is light, and in Him is no darkness" (1 John i. 5). If God is all purity and all holiness, must He not love these qualities in us? He cannot but love them and delight in them after a manner of which we have no adequate conception. Consider, further, what He has said about this virtue.

God has always manifested in the clearest terms His hatred of impurity. We can learn something of His hatred of this sin from the manner in which He has punished it (cf. Lev. xx. 12, 13). He has punished impurity with death in this world and with banishment

from His presence in the next. "Know you that no fornicator or unclean person hath inheritance in the kingdom of God" (Ephes. v. 5). On the other hand, He has again and again expressed His pleasure in purity and modesty. "How beautiful is a chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal" (Wisd. iv. 1). "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). Hence the repeated admonition which He addresses to us by the mouth of His apostles: "Brethren, whatsoever things are modest, whatsoever of good fame, think on these things" (Phil. iv. 8). "Refrain yourselves from carnal desires" (1 Pet. ii. 11).

2. God rewards this virtue in many ways. He rewards it, in the first place, with an earthly recompense. To the chaste soul He grants peace of conscience. This reward alone is so great that it outweighs a thousand times the pleasures of the worldling. "A secure mind is like a continual feast" (Prov. xv. 15). He makes them respected in society. Disgrace and contempt accompany the dissolute, whilst esteem and honor fall to the lot of those whose life is above reproach. It is said of Judith: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of thy people; thou hast loved chastity" (Jud. xv. 10). The last earthly blessing He bestows upon the chaste is a happy death. With what holy confidence, with what joy of soul, will those depart from this life who have kept their heart unstained from sin, and who have walked in the way of modesty and purity! Follow the example of the saints, St. Aloysius, St. Stanislaus, St. Rose of Lima,

and countless others who lived without the shadow of impurity ever falling upon their soul. "The torment of death shall not touch them" (Wisd. iii. 1).

Moreover, God rewards holy purity with a heavenly recompense. We read in the Apocalypse: "They sung as it were a new canticle before the throne; and no man could say the canticle but those hundred forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Apoc. xiv. 3, 4). The fairest crown in heaven is reserved for those who have conquered themselves. "How beautiful is a chaste generation! It triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts" (Wisd. iv. 1, 2).

God grant that this instruction may produce blessed fruit in you. You know wherein modesty consists; practise this virtue all the days of your life. This is what I would wish to see in you, this is what I entreat you to do. Sacrifices will be required of you, and sacrifices of no small proportions. But the Lord, our God, who loves chastity, will reward you richly for whatever sacrifices you make. What joy you will feel when you hear the voice of Jesus calling to you: "Come, My spouse, thou shalt be crowned" (Cant. iv. 8). What joy it will be for you when this life is over and you are admitted into the glory of Paradise: "Enter thou into the joys of thy Lord." In that happy land, immersed in an ocean of eternal delights, your heart will overflow with jubilation, and you will cast yourselves in thanksgiving at the feet of the Most High.

11. The Garden of the Soul.

"My Beloved is gone down into His garden to gather lilies." —Cant. vi. 1.

In the writings of St. Teresa we find the following passage: "I take delight in regarding my soul as a garden which I seek to render beautiful and attractive for Jesus Christ, my divine Spouse, that He may come and enjoy the perfume of the flowers that I carefully plant and tend in my garden for Him." The saint borrows the figure from the Canticle of canticles, wherein the bride says: "My Beloved is gone down into His garden to gather lilies." The Beloved here spoken of is the divine Bridegroom, and the garden is the soul of His spouse, the soul of the devout Christian. This is a beautiful and attractive image. May you also make your soul a garden for Jesus, so that He may take delight to dwell there amid the perfume of flowers, and reward you with heavenly joy. We will to-day consider the soul under the image of a garden, and see

I. How it is to be planted;
II. How it is to be cultivated;
III. How it is to be protected.

PART I.

1. The garden of your soul needs first of all good soil. If any one plants a garden he is first of all careful that the soil is good. This is a primary requisite, for no flowers will grow and flourish in poor soil or in the

sand of the desert. You must do likewise in regard to the spiritual garden of your soul. By good soil we mean a good will which turns from injustice and iniquity. Iniquity makes the soil of the heart barren for good works; nothing but thorns and thistles grow on it. Justice is a good soil, which produces the most beautiful blossoms and fruits. "Indeed there is fruit to the just" (Ps. lvii. 12). "The just shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow up like the cedar of Libanus" (Ps. xci. 13). If you would have good soil in your garden, you must pursue justice, you must endeavor to fulfil the law of God and walk before the Lord "sincere and without offence." "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things" (Phil. iv. 8).

Lay out your garden on good ground—have a good will, a will that has forsaken evil and has turned to justice. But it is not enough to have a good will; you must also persevere in acting according to the law of God. "Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. vii. 21).

2. You must plant your garden with choice flowers. These are the virtues. First of all, you must plant the virtues required of every Christian; principally faith, hope, and charity. Faith is the foundation and root of salvation; without it no one can enter the kingdom of heaven. From it springs hope, by which we are led to expect grace and eternal happiness from God. Charity is the crown of the spiritual edifice; it makes us just

and pleasing in God's sight and worthy of His love. Besides these three beautiful flowers, you must cultivate the flower of meekness: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. v. 4). Then there are the flowers of patience and mercy, which should not be wanting in your garden.

Besides the flowers which ought to be found in every garden planted by a Christian for the pleasure of God, there are some which are especially appropriate for your state in life. Of these I will mention but two in particular. The first of these is humility. Humility is a beautiful virtue, which is looked for by God especially in you. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" is Our Lord's promise. Led by humility, you will find the way that goes directly to glory, the glory in which the angels dwell and where God lives.

The second flower especially appropriate in your garden is chastity. "How beautiful is a chaste generation: for the memory thereof is immortal; because it is known both with God and with men" (Wisd. iv. 1). "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). St. Francis de Sales calls chastity the lily in the garland of flowers. It makes men almost equal with the angels, and gives them a beauty which is especially pleasing to God.

Plant your garden on good soil, and put in it the fairest flowers. Plant there the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the virtues of meekness, patience, mercy, humility, and chastity.

PART II.

Having planted your garden, you must also cultivate and tend it. Of what good is the most magnificent garden if weeds overrun it? Weeds will soon spring up if your garden is left without the proper care. To tend your garden you must, first of all,

1. Keep it free from weeds. No weeds grew in the garden of paradise. "God saw all things that He had made, and they were very good" (Gen. i. 31). When sin entered, evil weeds began to spring up everywhere. Thorns and thistles began to cover the face of the earth. Since that time weeds have abounded; they flourish in the highways and byways; in every field, in every meadow, they overrun the ground. They will spring up in your spiritual garden also unless you pull them up and set yourself seriously to work to keep it clean. It takes a good deal of labor and industry to clear a field of weeds. In the weeding of your garden serious work is required. The weeds, that is, the propensities to evil, sink their runners far into the soul, and strike deep roots. Do not shrink from the work; make it your business to eradicate the nettles of anger, of sloth, of pride, of impurity. Do not regard the labor; work on, though your hands be stung by the nettles or cut by the toughness of the stems. "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out" (Matt. v. 29).

You must root out the weeds earnestly and perseveringly. The roots, it is true, cannot be gotten rid of entirely, and as often as the weeds are cut down they come up again. Perseverance is absolutely necessary to keep your garden in good condition. You must weed

it to-day, to-morrow, and every succeeding day. You must work at it from morning till night, all your lifetime. "He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22).

2. Besides weeding your garden, you must also water the flowers that you have planted. The most beautiful garden would soon become a desert without water. One flower after another would droop and wither, and before long all would be dead. The same will happen in the spiritual garden, the heart of man, if it is left dry. The water that you must use is prayer. What rain does for the flowers of the field, that prayer does for the flowers of the soul; it refreshes and brightens them.

Theologians are unanimous in asserting that there is a wonderful power in prayer, and that the soul cannot grow in holiness without it. St. Augustine calls prayer the cornerstone of the virtues. Prayer is a vessel in which we draw the grace of the Holy Spirit out of the fountains of the Blessed Trinity. I exhort you, therefore, to be instant in prayer, take delight in it, pray always. Pray especially in the morning and in the evening, and sanctify the day by raising your thoughts frequently to God. Sanctify the Sunday and holidays by more earnest prayer. The Apostle bids us "pray without ceasing."

Moreover, you must water your garden with the dew of meditation. Like prayer, meditation on heavenly things has a powerful influence to make the soul advance in holiness. "Blessed is the man whose will is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he shall meditate

day and night. He shall be like a tree planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season" (Ps. i. 1, 2). Meditation strengthens the heart of man, so that he takes delight in holy things. Recollect yourself in the retirement of your own room, whilst fulfilling your daily duties; call to mind the goodness of God, His infinite beauty and wisdom, and forget not His sanctity and justice.

PART III.

One thing more is necessary after you have weeded and watered your garden—you must protect it. If a meadow is left without protection men and animals enter and destroy the vegetation. To protect your garden you must put a hedge around it.

1. There must be an outer hedge, by which I mean Christian vigilance. A fortification built of stones is often raised around a camp or a city to prevent the ingress of the enemy. You, too, must raise such a protection about your soul that the world and the devil may not enter it. Be, therefore, vigilant, and that not only at times, but always.

You can never be sure that the enemy will not enter your heart; you cannot be certain in the morning nor in the evening; you are not secure in youth or in old age. "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). Be on your guard at all times: "A wise man will fear in everything and will beware" (Ecclus. xviii. 27). "Therefore let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch" (1 Thess. v. 6).

Be on your guard against the enemy in all places.

Temptations follow you whithersoever you go. Whether you be on the sea or on land, whether on a high mountain or on the level ground, whether you be alone or in the crowded streets—everywhere temptations are found. The tempter follows you even into the sanctuary of God; he follows you to the altar of the Most High, to the very table of the Lord. Hence you must be on the watch in every place. Be on your guard at home and abroad, in your house and on the street, in solitude and in company. "With all watchfulness keep your heart" (Prov. iv. 23). "Blessed is he that watcheth" (Apoc. xvi. 15).

2. Besides the hedge, you need an inner enclosure. By this I mean Christian mortification. Wherever this is wanting the enemy enters and lays waste the soul. "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all perish" (Luke xiii. 3). "Mortify your members which are upon earth" (Col. iii. 5). Mortify your eyes that they may not gaze upon that which is sinful; mortify your ears that they may not listen to evil; your lips that they may not sully the soul's purity or wound charity; your whole body that it may abhor sin. "The strength of the just consists in conquering the flesh, resisting concupiscence, holding aloof from the pleasures of the world, and joyfully accepting the contrarieties of this mortal life for the sake of the eternal reward promised."

You have now learned what the garden of the heart is; that you must plant it, cultivate and protect it. Follow out the instructions received to-day, and your heavenly Spouse will delight to be in your garden.

12. Stars for Our Guidance.

"*The stars have given light in their watches.*"—Bar. iii. 34.

On dark nights the mariner looks up to the stars and steers his craft by their light. In former times, when the compass was unknown, the stars were, if not the only, at any rate the chief guidance to the seafarer. You, Christian young women, are sailing over a wide and deep ocean, the ocean of life, and if you would land in safety on the blessed shore of eternity, you must raise your eyes to the stars and direct your bark by them. You may think this a singular idea; yet I hold to my statement, and intend to-day to explain it to you at greater length. I wish to speak to you about the stars which arise and shine brightly before you on your way to salvation. These stars shine

I. Here upon earth;
II. From heaven above.

PART I.

The stars which give you light on earth are the pious young women among whom you live. You have their example always before your eyes; they are found everywhere, in the largest city and in the smallest village. They may be compared to stars because they give you light and show you the way in which you should walk.

1. They do not walk in the path that leads to sin and eternal death. This path is a broad road. "Broad is the way," says Our Lord; and because it is a broad road many can travel on it with comfort, taking with them all possible baggage; there is room on it for the lover of the world with all its pomp and pleasures. On this road you look in vain for the retiring, pious young woman. She does not create a sensation in the world, nor is she looking for comfort and ease. Her adorning is not that of "plaited hair and costly apparel," but it is the "incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit" (1 Pet. iii. 4).

The path that leads to death is not only a broad, but also a smooth one. It is a smooth and level road, where one can walk without fatigue and without difficulty; consequently "many there are that go therein." Multitudes of all ages and all classes of society turn their steps toward this road. But the pious young woman flies from it; she is not found with the many, but with the few; she does not lead a life devoid of labor and difficulties; her life is one beset with difficulties of all kinds. She bears the "burden of the day and the heats" (Matt. xx. 12).

The path that leads to death is one strewn with flowers. "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life." Roses without number blossom along this path, roses which Satan planted, flowers of sin. Foremost is the rose of impurity, which dazzles the eye and entices the senses. You will not find the Christian young woman on this path looking for these flowers;

she is not found in the dancing-hall and the theater, nor does she indulge in dangerous friendships.

Walk by the light of the stars that shine in the path which leads to life and not to destruction. May you never set foot upon the broad and easy road of death, the road upon which the votaries of the world love to travel. "Be not delighted in the path of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please you. Flee from it, pass not by it, go aside and forsake it" (Prov. iv. 14, 15). "The world," says St. Anselm, "lieth in wickedness, and her lustre is no true brilliance, but the glare of a consuming fire. Beware lest like moths, attracted by the nocturnal light, you fly at once into the flame."

2. Devout young women shine before you by their example on the path of life. This path is a narrow one: "How strait is the way that leadeth to life" (Matt. vii. 14). One cannot drive along a narrow road with a carriage and horses; to make a great display and to travel in state are impossible on such a road. He that would travel on it must leave behind all that the world holds dear. Pious young women are seen on the path; "they use this world as if they used it not" (1 Cor. vii. 31). They are not found in the busy world's gay mart, but prefer the seclusion of their own little room, where they live in quiet and peace of mind.

The path that leads to life is not only narrow, it is also steep. Heaven is a "city seated on a mountain" (Matt. v. 14). The path that leads to it is tiring to the foot of the traveler and exhaustive of his strength. It is the steep ascent of God's commandments. Upon this road is found many a pious young woman for

whom the first concern is the will of God, and the rule of her actions, His law. Slowly but surely, step by step, they climb higher and higher, by the steep way of humility, chastity, and obedience.

The way that leads to life is a thorny one: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. xi. 12). On this path are found the thorns of penance and self-denial. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross" (Matt. xvi. 24). On this path the truly Christian young woman is found; she belongs to them that have "crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences" (Gal. v. 24). She rejoices in mortification, and gladly offers to God the sacrifices which He demands of her.

May you all follow the guidance of these bright stars. May you all walk in the narrow way, and climb to the city seated on a mountain by the steep and thorny path of self-denial and mortification. "The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18). It is not an easy path to travel upon, but this should not alarm you, rather it should encourage you to make all the greater efforts to reach the summit. Look up to heaven; *sursum corda!*

PART II.

The holy women who have already entered upon their eternal reward in heaven shine down upon you like stars; for they tell you of the reward that awaits you if you follow their guidance. What is this reward? It is

1. Heavenly peace. All warfare is at an end; every conflict is over; in that land beyond the grave no sword is needed, battle and strife are unknown. "There," St. Augustine says, "we shall enjoy eternal rest, repose not only of the soul, but also of the body." No more war is to be waged against the enemies within us or without us; no more conflict with the devil, the world, and the flesh. Look upward to the holy virgins in heaven above. They are in the enjoyment of the most happy tranquillity and peace.

All sorrow is likewise at an end. As there is no more warfare, neither is there any more grief and suffering. "They may rest from their labors" (Apoc. xiv. 13). "They shall no more hunger nor thirst, nor shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. God shall wipe all tears from their eyes. . . . Death shall be no more nor mourning, nor crying nor sorrow shall be any more" (Apoc. vii. 16, xxi. 4). Look up to them for encouragement; they enjoy heavenly peace and freedom from all evil.

2. They enjoy celestial happiness. Joy abounds with them; their bliss is compared to an ocean, a vast immeasurable ocean. The oceans upon earth have limits. Wide as they are, yet their waves break upon shores that mark their boundaries; great as is their depth, yet they are not without bottom. The joys of heaven know no limits, they are infinite and without measure. "No eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). "The felicity of the elect is of such surpassing magnitude that it cannot be

measured; of so great extent that it cannot be computed; so precious that its value cannot be expressed; infinite that is without limits" (St. Anselm).

The joys of heaven are of unlimited duration. Centuries upon centuries pass, but the ocean of bliss is not lessened a single drop. Eons of ages succeed one another, but the happiness of heaven is ever at its beginning. Our Lord promises us: "Every one that hath left house . . . . or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting" (Matt. xix. 29). "The just shall go into life everlasting" (Matt. xxv. 46). "I give them life everlasting" (John x. 28). Our Lord repeatedly insisted upon the eternal duration of the reward of the just. O blissful life that knows no end! It is a happy eternity, an eternal happiness.

This, then, is the reward of those that have gone before you into the happiness of Christ's kingdom; the peace of heaven and eternal joys. From their country, the hope of the redeemed, they beckon to you, and say: "See, O sisters, what infinite happiness is our portion, how we are recompensed a million times for the little sacrifices we made on earth. Come, follow us." You, too, are to look forward to the same reward, the same peace, and the same joys. Remember this is the hour of conflict and of suffering. Remember this when the world, the devil, and the flesh would lead you away from God and His holy law. Look beyond the passing hour and beyond the passing world to the eternal country, to the never-ending happiness of heaven. Behold there the host of holy virgins who amid the same temp-

tations and the same conflicts which you sustain have conquered, and now bear in their hands the palm of victory. You will thus be encouraged to "fight the good fight," and to "suffer for justice' sake."

To-day we have considered the stars that guide us on our path to heaven. Fix your gaze upon them, and do not let them pass from your mind's eye. Look upon the stars that guide your footsteps here upon earth, the pious young women in the congregation; learn from them how to serve God. Raise your eyes to heaven and consider those who have gone before you who now enjoy the reward of their fidelity to God. From them you will obtain encouragement in your conflicts and trials; for you see there the reward that awaits you. If you follow them you will receive "a kingdom of glory and a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord" (Wisd. v. 17).

13. The Virtue of Virginity.

"*They shall be as the angels of heaven.*"—Matt. xxii. 30.

VIRGINITY is a virtue of the greatest beauty; it implies grave obligations and produces in the soul a splendor that makes it equal to the angels in heaven. Do you realize the true beauty, I might say the wonderful charm, of one who is called a virgin and bears this name worthily? Unhappily, the greatest ignorance is often found amongst people as regards the true nature of this virtue. Some think that it is but the name for a state in life, that of being unmarried; others look upon it as a disgrace or at least a misfortune. Since this is so, we shall to-day consider the virtue of virginity a little more closely, and endeavor to explain to you what it is in the light of our holy faith. We shall consider

I. Its nature;
II. Its value.

PART I.

The Holy Ghost Himself describes to us the nature of this virtue: "A virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. vii. 34). Hence we see that the virtue of virginity consists in being pure in body and in spirit out of love of God.

1. A virgin must be chaste in body; hence it is necessary that she remain unmarried. There is nothing sinful in marriage; on the contrary, matrimony is of divine institution, and the Apostle calls it a "great sacrament in Christ and the Church" (Ephes. v. 32). The Council of Trent teaches that matrimony is one of the seven sacraments of the New Law (S. 24, c. 1). It is requisite, in order to lead a virginal life, to keep the body, the temple of the Holy Ghost, inviolate, and for this reason it is indispensable to lead a single life. Only the unmarried can lay claim to the title of virgin; when they put on the nuptial ring they exchange this title for that of wife.

Virginity also requires that one lead a spotless life. One whose life is not spotless has no right to the title of virgin. A virgin cannot permit undue familiarities; she must shun everything that may tarnish this virtue. It will not be necessary to enter more fully into this subject: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. xiii. 9). A virgin is holy in body; for this reason she must be unmarried and must lead a life of purity, shunning everything that may be prejudicial to virtue.

2. A virgin must be chaste in mind. She must suppress every evil desire. "The thought and imagination of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21). The propensities here referred to are, preeminently, carnal lusts. Man is a creature of flesh and blood, and his animal nature asserts itself continually. If you would lead a chaste and virginal life, you must subdue all impure affections, you must hold aloof from

all friendships which awaken sensuality. Do not imagine that you can lead such a life without taking the proper precautions against danger. Dangerous intimacies enkindle the fire of impurity, and when it is once enkindled it spreads rapidly and soon becomes a great conflagration.

Moreover, it behooves the Christian virgin to banish every evil thought from her mind instantly. "Evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xv. 26). "I say unto you; whosoever shall look upon a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. v. 28). We cannot, it is true, whilst we pursue our pilgrimage here upon earth, hope to be entirely free from such thoughts; even souls of the most exemplary purity are assailed by them to a greater or less degree. But if you would preserve your purity of mind never willingly acquiesce in them; cast them from you, as you would fling away a firebrand fallen upon you.

You have now seen in what the virtue of virginity consists. Think over your own life, look into your heart—have you kept yourself pure in mind and body? God grant that this be true in your case. What reason for rejoicing if it is! There can be no greater happiness for you than this consciousness.

PART II.

1. Virginity is a virtue of the greatest value, for it is of surpassing beauty. Consider first its supernatural origin. Virginity has a heavenly origin and is praised in the highest terms by Our Lord Himself. We read

in the Holy Scriptures: "His disciples say unto Him: If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry. Who said to them: All men take not this word" (Matt. xix. 10, 11). It is, therefore, a virtue which is reserved to the few. Christ also extolled this virtue by His life. "It was fitting that we should have such an High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled" (Hebr. vii. 26). The Pharisees brought many a charge against Him and said all manner of evil things about Him; yet they never once ventured to throw the least doubt upon the purity of His life. Moreover, He manifested His love for this singular virtue by choosing virginal souls to be about Him. His precursor, His Mother, His foster-father, His favorite disciple, were all virgins.

Consider the glorious prerogatives of virginity. It is more beautiful than the other virtues. "How beautiful is a chaste generation with glory: for the memory that is immortal; because it is known both with God and with men" (Wisd. iv. 1). Hear what the Fathers of the Church say on this subject. St. Cyril: "Let us acknowledge the splendor of chastity; it is a superhuman perfection." St. Isidore: "Virginity is of priceless value; from it a radiance proceeds more dazzling than that of the sun." St. Francis de Sales: "Chastity is the lily among the virtues; it possesses a brilliance peculiar to itself; it is the most lovely, the noblest virtue of soul and of body." St. Ephrem: "O Virginity, thou who dost blossom like a fair rose in this mortal body, filling with fragrance the place of thy abode." It is a virtue which raises man to an equality

with the angels: "They shall be like the angels of heaven." On these words of Holy Scripture St. Augustine comments saying: "Those who neither marry nor are given in marriage shall be like unto the angels in heaven. Let no man wonder that virgins should be compared to the angels, since they are united in mystic espousal to the Lord of angels." St. Chrysostom exclaims: "Behold the excellence of virginity. Behold how it elevates the dwellers of earth, raising them so high as to cause them, whilst still clothed in the garments of instability, to resemble the incorporeal spirits, the angels of heaven." St. Basil: "Those who lead a life of virginal purity are angels in human form, and not angels of the lowest order, but of the highest and loftiest rank." St. Cyprian: "It is said that virginity places man on a level with the angels; yet if we consider the matter rightly, we shall perceive that it makes him superior to them; for man has to battle whilst encumbered with the flesh and must conquer his nature, which is not the case with the angels."

2. It is further a virtue which merits the richest reward. It requires chastity of body and soul. This is no easy matter, for we live in a world where sin meets us every day. Our nature is frail, and our heart prone to evil. The enemies of our salvation are powerful, and offer us every enticement to drink of the chalice of impurity. Of all the conflicts which the Christian has to engage in, none can be compared in severity to this. The battle against this evil must be fought day by day. Consequently the greatest courage is required of us, especially in times of strong temptations. Without the

assistance of God's grace we should surely be overcome. But there is one thing to encourage us; it is the thought of the reward that awaits us after the conflict is over. This reward will be all the greater the more difficult the conflict has been.

"The chaste generation triumphed, crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts" (Wisd. iv. 2). A crown of extraordinary brilliance is given to virginity, and the wearer of that crown shall shine as the angels. Holy Scripture indicates the special reward given to virgins: "They sang, as it were, a new canticle before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the ancients. And no one could say the canticle but those hundred and forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Apoc. xiv. 3, 4). St. Augustine thus comments on this passage: "Whither does the Lamb go? He goes thither where joys unspeakable are to be enjoyed, joys peculiar to virginal souls, which are quite distinct from the delights of the blessed in general who are not virgins."

The instruction given you to-day is one of the utmost importance. Recall to mind what you have heard on the nature of virginity and on its priceless value: that it requires chastity of body and soul; that it is a virtue of extraordinary beauty, and one which will bring the richest reward. God grant that this instruction bring abundant fruit in you! The fruit I desire to produce is that you may conceive a high esteem of this virtue,

and may make it your endeavor to conduct yourselves accordingly. Do not imagine that you are bound to remain single all your lifetime; circumstances may arise that make it better for you to enter the married state. But those amongst you who desire to lead a life of greater perfection will resolve to lead the life of true virgins out of love of God. To do this will require sacrifices and will involve many a struggle, but no one will ever regret the generous resolve when the hour of death approaches. At any rate, all of you must make the resolution that during the time that you are leading a single life you will live according to the requirements of this virtue. "This is the will of God, your sanctification . . . God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification. Therefore he that despiseth these things, despiseth not man but God, who also hath given His Holy Spirit in us" (1 Thess. iv. 3, 7, 8).

14. A Shield in Time of Temptation.

"*Take hold of arms and shield.*—Ps. xxxiv. 2.

"THE life of a man on earth is a warfare" (Job vii. 1). "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness" (Ephes. vi. 12). "Here below a man is ensnared with many passions, encompassed with many errors, hardened with temptations. Thou art never secure in this life; but as long as thou livest thou art in the midst of enemies and assailed on the right hand and on the left" (Imit. iii. 48, 35). You also, Christian young women, are stationed on the battle-field of this life, and a triple enemy is arrayed against you. You must engage in the conflict, and must do battle day by day, hour by hour. The contest is often arduous and the end uncertain. I will, therefore, place in your hands a shield on which all the arrows of the enemy will be shattered. This shield is in these thoughts that you are to keep before you:

I. The thought of God;

II. The thought of your own soul.

PART I.

1. Remember who God is, and this thought will be a shield against sin in the hour of temptation. He is the

almighty God. "Thou art mighty, O Lord. Thou rulest the power of the sea and appeasest the motion of the waves thereof. The north and the sea Thou hast created" (Ps. lxxxviii. 9, 10, 13). By a single word He created the universe, and by a single word He could destroy it. At the breath of His lips the mountains crumble to dust, and death and destruction overwhelm the whole human race. "Almighty is His name" (Ex. xv. 3). "He doth things great and incomprehensible and wonderful" (Job ix. 10). How should I, a contemptible worm of earth, presume to offend Him?

He is, besides, the all-bountiful God. "Every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who giveth to all abundantly and upbraideth not" (James i. 17, 5). He is our Father, our preserver, our greatest benefactor, to whom we owe all that we have. He is the giver of every blessing and every grace; He treats us with the greatest kindness; He loves us with a Father's love. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) How should I, the child of His love, dare offend so good a God?

He is the omniscient God. "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thy eyes, our life in the light of Thy countenance" (Ps. viii. 9). Past, present, and future are before His eyes as an open book; His eye penetrates the seclusion of the chamber, the darkness of night. Even the inmost recesses of the soul contain no secret for Him, and the hidden thoughts of the heart are open to Him. "He hath searched out the deep, and the heart

of men, and considered their crafty devices. No thought escapeth Him, and no word can hide itself from Him" (Ecclus. xlii. 18, 20). How should I presume to offend the omniscient God?

He is also an all-merciful God. "I am the Lord, showing mercy unto thousands to them that love Me" (Ex. xx. 6). He it is who has mercy and compassion upon mankind; for "the earth is full of the mercy of the Lord" (Ps. xxxii. 5). His patience with us is infinite. With tender love and compassion He raised us from the misery into which we had fallen by sin, and remitted all our guilt. How should I venture to offend against the all-merciful God?

He is a God of justice. "Justice and judgment are the preparation of Thy throne" (Ps. lxxxviii. 15). He is the rewarder of every good deed. He is the punisher of every sin; "it is fearful to fall into His hands" (Hebr. x. 31). He is the Judge who will one day weigh our life in the balance of justice, and pronounce upon us the sentence either of blessing or of condemnation. How should we dare offend Him? The thought of God is a sacred shield in the hour of temptation. Take hold of this shield; turn your thoughts to God. Think of what He is, and

2. Remember what is His holy will. It is the will of God that you regard sin with abhorrence. He is infinitely holy, and a holy God cannot do otherwise than hate sin. "Thou art not a God that willest iniquity" (Ps. v. 5). How often He has made known to man His hatred of sin, and how often He has chastised the world on account of it! How is it possible

that I should commit sin, that I should wilfully do what is opposed to the will of God?

Furthermore, it is the will of God that you remain faithful to Him. He has bound us to Himself, He has bound us to His Sacred Heart by a thousand bonds of love and grace. "Is it not thy Father that hath possessed thee, made thee, and created thee?" (Deut. xxxii. 6.) It is His will that you should not forsake Him, but serve Him all the days of your life. How could I turn away from my God and forsake His standard?

When the tempter approaches, take the holy shield of the thought of God and hold it up between you and the enemy. Think of God, when the world would lead you astray. Think of God, when your carnal nature urges you to fulfil its desires. Think of God, when the devil approaches you and tempts you to transgress the law of God. Joseph in Egypt remembered God when temptation approached him, and he won a glorious victory. "How then," he exclaimed, "can I do this wicked thing and sin against my God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9.) You, too, will conquer if you raise your eyes to heaven and think of God, when temptation assails you. Recall to mind in the hour of trial the will of God, and say with David: "I have set the Lord always in my sight, for He is at my right hand that I be not moved" (Ps. xv. 8).

PART II.

1. Another shield in time of temptation is the thought of your immortal soul. You have but one soul. If you should by some accident be deprived of an eye, you have another; if you should lose a hand,

there is still another; but the loss of your soul means the loss of everything—you have nothing to replace it; you have no second soul. Thus a holy Pope once replied to a monarch who asked something sinful of him: "If I had two souls, I might sacrifice one to please you; but as I have but one, I cannot risk the loss of it." Think of this and say to yourself: If I consent to this temptation I shall perhaps lose my soul, and this loss is irreparable.

You do not know how quickly this loss may follow upon sin. Who is secure for a single instant against death? "There is but one step between me and death" (1 Kings xx. 3). How soon this step is taken! Many a one has died in the very act of committing sin. Recall the fate of Ananias. We are told that he fell down with a lie upon his lips (Acts v. 5). Sapphira died the same way. "Immediately she fell down before the Apostle's feet and gave up the ghost" (Acts v. 10). Think of your fate, should the anger of God fall upon you whilst committing a sin against His holy law. You would be lost, and that for all eternity. "What exchange shall a man make for his soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.)

2. Your soul is of the greatest value; it is created change shall a man make for his soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.) "God made man after His own image" (Ecclus. xvii. 1). God has stamped His image on the soul of man, and hence it is infinitely superior to all things created on the face of the earth. Your soul is precious also because it has been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. "Knowing you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold and silver, but with the precious

blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled" (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). The Son of God shed the last drop of His blood to sanctify the souls of men. "The Redeemer came," says St. Augustine, "and paid the ransom for mankind. He shed His blood and thereby purchased the salvation of the world." "You are bought with a great price" (1 Cor. vi. 20). Do you ask what the Redeemer purchased? Reflect upon the price He paid, and you will realize the value and nobility of your soul. The precious blood of Christ was the price paid for it, and is this not worth more than the whole universe?

No creature upon earth equals your soul in nobility; all the crowns and empires of the world cannot be compared with it. "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" (Matt. xxvi. 26.)

3. Finally, your souls are consecrated to God. Your soul was dedicated to God, in the first place, at the time of your Baptism. You then made a solemn promise before heaven and earth, that you would have no partnership with the spirits of darkness, that you would not fight under their standard, but would cling to God and obey Him. You then gave your soul to the Triune God, and vowed to keep it pure from all defilements of sin. This was a solemn promise. "The promises made in Baptism are irrevocable vows; no individual, no authority in heaven or upon earth, can release you from them" (St. Augustine).

You have, further, frequently dedicated yourselves to God in the course of your life. Call to mind your

first holy communion. Did you not then in the joy and exultation of your heart, promise to be faithful to God all the days of your life, that under no circumstances would you desert His service? Think of your subsequent communions; did you not again and again renew this promise? Review in spirit the many prayers you offered up to God, and the many times you promised Him fidelity.

In the time of temptation, think of these things and say to yourselves: I have consecrated my soul to the service of God; I will be faithful to these promises. How can I surrender it to the power of the devil? How can I listen to the false promises of the tempter?

Take as your protection the shield which your faith offers you against the attacks of the evil one. Hold it fast, bind it to your arm, never lay it aside. When the time of temptation comes, hold this shield between you and the tempter. Think of God. Think of Him who is almighty, all-bountiful, omniscient, all-merciful, all-just. Remember that God has commanded you to abhor sin, to remain faithful to Him. Think of your immortal soul, that it is your only treasure, that it is noble above words to express, that it is consecrated to God. Remember, too, that if you use this shield, you have the promise of God that you will not succumb to the attacks of the tempter. "He that shall overcome, shall be clothed in white garments, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (Apoc. iii. 5).

15. The Virtue of Obedience.

"*Obey your prelates and be subject to them.*"—Hebr. xxxi. 17.

ST. PAUL exhorts the Hebrews to whom he writes: "Obey your prelates and be subject to them." This admonition is a most weighty one, for obedience is the basis of happiness and welfare both for the individual and for society; it maintains peace in the family and promotes order in the State. Do away with obedience, and strife will ensue, tears and misery without end will follow. Obedience is desirable not only for these reasons—it has a far higher claim upon us; it is a Christian virtue commanded by God. Taught by Jesus Christ and enjoined by His command, obedience bears the stamp of its celestial origin, and merits a reward whose duration is eternal. Unhappily, this truth is too often ignored, and thus man deprives himself of the most signal graces of heaven and of the richest treasures of merit by disobedience. For this reason, it will be well for us to give this virtue an attentive consideration. We will inquire

I. In what obedience consists;

II. What are its limits.

PART I.

St. Thomas of Aquin tells us that obedience is a virtue which makes the will of man ready to accom-

plish the will of one who is in a position to command. Accordingly the virtue of obedience consists in submitting our will to that of another who is in authority over us, and executing the orders which he gives us. Two points present themselves for our consideration.

1. Who are our superiors? In the first place, we are all subject to God. He is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. xvi. 4). "Of Him and by Him and in Him are all things" (Rom. xi. 36). The whole world owes obedience to God, every creature is bound to do His will. This is true pre-eminently of man, to whom God has granted such wonderful privileges, whom He has endowed with such magnificent gifts and powers. But has God made His will known to man? Assuredly; He proclaimed it Himself. Amid flames of fire and peals of thunder the giving of the Law took place on Mt. Sinai when He gave us the ten commandments. Again and again He exhorted us to keep His law: "Keep My precepts and do them: I am the Lord" (Lev. xx. 8). More clearly still He made His will known to us through His only-begotten Son. "In these days God hath spoken to us by His Son" (Hebr. i. 2). In accordance with the command of His Father, the Son became man, and went about in the land of Judea to instruct the people in the will of His Father. He explained more fully the ten commandments and insisted upon their observance.

We are also subject to men. God has appointed men to be His representatives, and to issue orders and commands in His name. "There is no power but from

God, and those that are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (Rom. xiii. 1, 2). Human lawgivers may be divided into two classes, the civil and the ecclesiastical. The precepts of the Church express the will of God, and the faithful are bound to obey them. The Church issues commands and empowers priests to enforce them. "He that heareth you, heareth Me," said Our Lord to His apostles. "The sheep hear the voice of the shepherd" (John x. 3). Amongst the secular superiors, our parents hold the first place; but there are also other superiors whom we must obey. "Children, obey your parents" (Ephes. vi. 1). "Be subject to your masters with all fear" (1 Pet. ii. 18). Christ teaches us this through His apostles.

2. We ought to accomplish the will of those placed over us with a right intention. If obedience is to be reckoned as a virtue, it must spring from a motive of faith. St. Paul tells us what this should be: "Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with a good will serving as to the Lord and not to men" (Ephes. vi. 6, 7). "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). If we obey only to please men, our obedience is not a virtue deserving a supernatural reward.

We ought also do the will of our superiors in the right manner. We should do it willingly. This implies the absence of all caviling. One who obeys willingly does not ask the why and the wherefore of the command; he does what he is told without questioning, simply because he has been commanded. He says with

the prophet Samuel: "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth" (1 Kings iii. 10); or with St. Paul: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" (Acts ix. 6.) Willing obedience knows no delay. He who obeys willingly obeys promptly; he does not put off compliance with the orders received until a later time. "Do ye all things without murmurings and hesitations" (Phil. ii. 14). Follow the example of Samuel. "The virtue of obedience," says St. Bernard, "is averse to all hesitation and delay; it will not hear of postponement, it hates lingering and slowness; it rather anticipates the command, its eyes are always ready to look, its ears to listen, its tongue to respond, its hands to work, its feet to run as they are bid."

Our obedience should be exact. One who obeys with exactitude is not satisfied with the appearance of having fulfilled the command received; he takes the matter seriously, whether it be great or small; he makes it his business to execute the will of his superior in the minutest details. "All things whatever you do, do heartily" (Col. iii. 25). Our obedience should be the same in the absence of our superior as it is under his eyes. He who obeys out of a right motive is just as careful in his obedience when his superior is at a distance as he would be in his presence, "not serving the eye," as St. Paul says.

Our obedience ought to be cheerful. "Do ye all things without murmurings" (Phil. iii. 14). Our obedience should not spring from slavish fear, but should be prompted by love. Therefore obey cheerfully and gladly. Obedience loses all its value when we

obey merely to escape censure or when it is accompanied with murmuring and complaining.

Ask yourselves whether you practise obedience in the manner described. Have you obeyed God by keeping His commandments? Have you obeyed those who are set over you, and followed their orders? Have you obeyed with a good intention and in the right manner? If so, then you have accumulated a store of merits and you will receive an eternal reward. But perhaps the conscience of some of you will tell you that you have often transgressed and failed in the virtue of obedience; that you have often broken the law of God, and paid little heed to the commands of men; that you have generally followed your own will. Alas that it is so! May this sad state of things change soon!

PART II.

1. In regard to God there are no limits to our obedience. We are bound to obey Him in all things. God is the supreme Lawgiver. He is "the Blessed and only Mighty, the King of kings and the Lord of lords" (1 Tim. vi. 15). All created beings, from the cherubim who stand before the throne of God to the worm that crawls in the dust, are under obligation of yielding obedience to God, their Creator. God asserts this obligation in the most explicit manner: "What I command thee, that only do thou to the Lord. Neither shalt thou add anything nor diminish" (Deut. xii. 32). His apostles Christ commands to go into the whole

world, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 20). "Whosoever shall keep the whole law but offend in one point is become guilty of all" (James ii. 10). Hence we see that we must obey God in all things.

God often requires sacrifices of us which are most bitter to us, sacrifices from which human nature shrinks. "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 38). "If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off" (Mark ix. 42). "Love your enemies" (Luke vi. 27). We must obey God, even when obedience comes hard and demands sacrifices of us. Yet we must not lose heart, for He who commands these things at the same time gives us strength to fulfil them. With St. Paul we can say: "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). Witness Abraham and the martyrs.

2. Let us now inquire what limits are placed to obedience in regard to our fellow men. Toward them blind, unconditional obedience is not required of us; we are bound to obey them only in things that are just. If our superiors were to demand things from us which are against the law of God, it would be sinful for us to obey them. He who is truly obedient will do the will of his superior, even when in matters where there is no strict obligation to obey, provided there is nothing sinful in that which is ordered. "The mind of the just studieth obedience" (Prov. xv. 28). Nothing is more pleasing to God than when we deny our own will for His sake. Children are not bound to obey their parents when they try to force them to embrace a vocation for

which they have no inclination. If they do more than counsel their children in these matters parents overstep the limits of their authority. Although their counsel ought not to be disregarded, yet children are at liberty to decide for themselves in these matters. It sometimes happens that parents will not allow their daughters to enter a convent, or that they try to force their children into some marriage which appeals to them. In such cases the law of obedience ceases to bind children.

We owe obedience to our superiors only in what is lawful and just. If a command is issued which is opposed to the law of God, we may not obey. "We ought to obey God more than man" (Acts v. 29). If we were to obey such commands, our obedience, far from being a virtue, would be sinful. In such cases we should firmly refuse compliance with the command. "How should I do this wickedness and sin against my God?" But it may be said that your superior will be angry with you if you refuse to obey. That may be, but the blame will not rest on you; the responsibility will rest with him. Nor can it be said that the sin is with the superior alone, and that you merely carry out his orders. His sin will indeed be greater, but you would co-operate with him in it, and therefore not be free from guilt. Much less can you excuse yourself by the example of others; for if no fear of God is found with them, let it be found with you at least.

Forget not the lesson you have learned to-day, and practise the virtue of obedience. Obey God, obey your parents, obey those that are placed in authority over you. Your guardian angel will inscribe every act of

obedience, and your future reward will be great. "This is the promise which He hath promised us, life everlasting" (1 John ii. 25). "Obedience is the ladder whereby man ascends into heaven" (St. Bonaventure).

16. Three Precious Words.

"I beseech you that you walk worthy in the vocation in which you are called."—Ephes. iv. 1.

THERE are three words which contain more wisdom for the Christian maiden than many a bulky tome. One who takes them to heart will find in them much peace during life and eternal happiness hereafter. The words are: Avoid, Be Silent, and Suffer. Would that I could engrave them deeply upon your hearts. We will to-day consider their meaning and pray that their lesson be not lost upon us.

I. Avoid;
II. Be Silent;
III. Suffer.

PART I.

1. Among the first things to be avoided by the Christian young woman is inquisitiveness; it is a destroyer of peace. "Curiosity," says St. Bernard, "is of no value; it drives peace from the soul and fills it with unrest." This is undeniably true, for one who is a prey to curiosity wants to know everything that goes on in the world, what others are doing and saying, and thus fills her mind with thoughts and ideas that disturb, if they do not entirely destroy, the peace of the soul. Hence the Holy Spirit admonishes us in these

words: "In unnecessary things be not overcurious. The suspicion of them hath deceived many and detained the mind in vanity" (Ecclus. iii. 25).

Moreover, inquisitiveness leads to sin. Witness Eve, of whom we read: "The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and fair to the eye and delightful to behold; and she took of the fruit thereof and did eat" (Gen. iii. 6). Many have since then fallen into sin on account of their curiosity. Thus David fell through a look of curiosity (2 Kings xi. 2). Ask yourselves, has it not been your own experience that curiosity has been a fruitful source of temptation, if not of sin?

Be on your guard against the dangers of curiosity and inquisitiveness. Do not busy yourselves with what others do or say, how they dress and how they behave. Keep a watch over your eyes and ears. "In many things it behooves thee to be ignorant and to esteem thyself as dead upon earth. Many things also must thou pass by with a deaf ear" (Imit. iii. 44).

2. You must, further, avoid pride. Scarcely any other sin is so hateful to God as pride. "Every proud man is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 5). This is the declaration of Holy Scripture. St. Ambrose declares pride to be the worst of all the sins of which man is guilty; for it is the source from which came the ruin of all mankind. It is the arrow which the devil first employed to ruin man when he was beloved of God. Can we wonder then that the angel of God departs from one who is filled with arrogance, that peace, mercy, and innocence do not long dwell in such a soul?

When a soul is given over to pride, the devil makes

his entrance into it. "Pride is the beginning of all sin" (Ecclus. x. 15). Pride is the chief, the queen of sins. "It is the parent of many vices," says St. Gregory. From pride spring disobedience, boasting, dissimulation, strife, obstinacy, and dissension. From arrogance arise disregard of God, undue self-confidence, presumption, and many other vices. These evil inclinations take possession of the soul which is filled with pride, and Satan himself enters with them.

Shun pride; never count yourselves better than others; do not indulge in self-complacency; refrain from talking in a vain and frivolous manner; dress simply, as becomes a Christian young woman. "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words" (Tob. iv. 14).

3. Avoid dangerous intimacies; they are fatal to piety. "No man," Our Lord declares, "can serve two masters" (Matt. vi. 24). Two opposite affections cannot subsist in the human heart at the same time. When an engrossing earthly passion takes possession of the heart, the love of God and piety are gradually lost. When a young woman forms an undesirable acquaintance with a young man, she soon loses all pleasure in the service of God, all delight in the things of religion. She neglects prayer, sermons become distasteful to her, she approaches the sacraments less frequently. "She forsaketh the guide of her youth and hath forgotten the covenant of her God" (Prov. ii. 17).

Acquaintances of this sort are apt to disfigure the beauty of the soul. St. Jerome compares them to wounds inflicted by the fangs of a serpent. They are

the source of innumerable temptations, and frequently devastate the soul completely. Countless young women have made this sad experience and have stained the purity of their souls by sins which they have had reason to bewail until the hour of their death.

Avoid such acquaintances; never keep company with any young man unless there is a well-founded prospect of marriage. "If sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them" (Prov. i. 10).

PART II.

1. Be silent, for talkativeness often does much harm. One who is incessantly talking shows herself not to be a wise woman. Holy Scripture compares the talker to a fool. "He who answereth before he heareth, showeth himself to be a fool" (Prov. xviii. 13). "Hast thou seen a man hasty to speak? Folly is rather to be looked for than his amendment" (Prov. xxix. 20). One who talks much is looked upon as a gossip whom people have little respect for. Such a one burdens her soul with heavy responsibilities. "I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment" (Matt. xii. 36). Talkativeness is the occasion of many sins. "In the multitude of words there shall not want sin" (Prov. x. 19). Talkativeness leads to boasting, to uncharitableness, to calumny and slander, to impurity. Learn then to hold your peace and to refrain your tongue.

2. Silence is most profitable. It will obtain for you the respect of the whole world. A gossip is never respected. "There is one that holdeth his peace that is

found wise, and there is another that is hateful that is bold in speech" (Ecclus. xx. 5). "A man of good understanding will hide his words, and the lips of many shall declare his wisdom" (Ecclus. i. 30).

Silence is meritorious in the sight of God; it is an act of virtue which requires much self-denial. St. James says: "The tongue can no man tame; an unquiet evil full of deadly poison" (iii. 8). For this reason silence is often more meritorious before God than fasting and discipline. See, therefore, that you bridle your tongue. "Make doors and bars to thy mouth. Melt down thy gold and silver and make a balance for thy words and a just balance for thy mouth" (Ecclus. xxviii. 28). This does not mean, however, that you are to appear dumb in the society of others, but it is only intended to warn you against indulging the love of gossip. It is to warn you, too, against speaking when it is your duty to be silent. When you are reproved by your superiors, be silent, even if you are not to blame, and offer your silence to God as a sacrifice. This will be a greater spiritual benefit to you than if you were to work miracles and raise the dead to life.

PART III.

1. You cannot escape suffering; it is common to all mankind. The whole human race is subject to the curse brought on it by sin, and tribulation and affliction are its portion. "Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt and as thou seest, and thou wilt never find but that thou hast always something to

suffer. Either thou wilt feel pain of body or feel in thy soul tribulation of spirit" (Imit. ii. 12). Thus thorns beset your path at all times.

Besides the ills common to all mankind, there are sufferings peculiar to yourself, to your state in life. Your position is one of dependence. You are daughters, and must obey your parents, or you are in the employ of others, and must conform to their wishes. This is not always easy, and requires much self-denial. Your state in life requires you to work early and late; in all sorts of weather you must perform the duties of your calling. This again is not easy; it often becomes exceedingly burdensome. You must, further, suffer for virtue's sake. If you lead a godly life, you must shun the world and its idle amusements, you must deny yourself many pleasures, practise mortification and self-denial.

2. Since you cannot escape suffering, see that you profit by it. Bear suffering without complaining. What will it avail you to pour your grief into the ears of others? You cannot better matters by complaining about them. For the most part you will meet with but poor consolation, and will lose the merit which you might have obtained by bearing your cross with resignation. "Take all that shall be laid on thee; and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep silent" (Ecclus. ii. 3).

But this is not all. You must do more—you must bear your cross joyfully. There is something elevating and ennobling about the cross. "Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of

humiliation" (Ecclus. ii. 5). "Blessed are they that suffer for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 10). "In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is the infusion of sweetness from above, in the cross is strength of mind, in the cross is the height of virtue, in the cross is the perfection of sanctity" (Imit. ii. 12).

In conclusion I repeat: learn these three precious words, keep them in your heart, and let them be your guide in life: Avoid, Be Silent, Suffer.

17. The Christian Maiden on Her Bier.

"The days of man are short, and the number of his months is with Thee; Thou hast appointed his bounds which cannot be passed."—Job xiv. 5.

THE prophet Isaias tells us: "All flesh is grass and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered and the flower is fallen" (Is. xl. 6, 7). Just as the flower appears and emits its fragrance for but a few days and is then cut down by the scythe of the mower, so it is with man. "The days of man are short, and the number of his months is with Thee; Thou hast appointed his bounds which cannot be passed." Man lives but a few years here below; then death raises his scythe and cuts him down, and he is garnered like a ripe sheaf into eternity. This hour will strike for you, too, Christian young women; and when it has struck your souls will depart to leave your bodies, cold and pallid, to be placed into a coffin and lowered into the earth. Let us contemplate the devout maiden placed on her bier; it will prove a profitable instruction for us to-day. Let us consider her

I. As she is stretched upon the bier; and

II. Listen to what she says to us.

PART I.

1. A wreath is placed on her head. This wreath is a token of virginity. The custom is well-nigh universal

that girls and young women wear a wreath on certain occasions, as, for instance, at the time of a solemn procession, the time of their first communion, the time of their marriage. If a young woman remains single, it is customary also in many places to put a wreath on her head after death. That wreath symbolizes virginity, the fairest virtue, the choicest flower that blossoms on earth. "How beautiful is a chaste generation!" Imagine that you see a young woman in her last, long sleep, laid on her bier, a wreath upon her head. The blossoms, the leaves that compose that wreath shine with a splendor all their own, brilliant as pearls; they reflect the light of heaven. We are told that virginity makes men the equals of the angels; nay, if we consider the matter aright, it renders them superior to the angels.

The wreath is, besides, an emblem of triumph. Virginity cannot be preserved without continual struggles. Man is made of flesh and blood and lives in the midst of a seductive world. Hence there is need of continual warfare. Oftentimes the struggle becomes so difficult that she would cry out: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 23.) But now we contemplate her, cold and lifeless, on her bier, the wreath upon her brow, the wreath which has become the crown of victory.

She is clothed in white garments, which are a sign of purity. White is the color of innocence; for this reason infants are dressed in white when they are brought to be cleansed in the laver of regeneration. The white robe which clothes the Christian maiden

upon her bier is her choicest decoration; it announces to the beholder that she has kept her body and soul unstained by sins of impurity. It shows that she has followed the counsel of St. Paul: "This is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; not in the passion of lust" (1 Thess. iv. 3). This robe of honor, the white garment, belongs to her by right in the hour of death. It is also a pledge of heavenly glory. White is the color of light, and the hosts of heaven are said to be arrayed in white apparel. We read in the Apocalypse: "The armies that are in heaven followed Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (xix. 14). The maiden who has fought the good fight and has entered into the joys of heaven deserves indeed the honor of being dressed in white when prepared for the grave.

She holds a crucifix in her hands. It is true the crucifix is placed in the hands of all Christians; yet it has a special signification when placed in the lifeless hands of a young woman. As she lies upon the bier, her hands blanched by the icy touch of death, clasping the crucifix to her breast, it is for her the sign of her betrothal to Christ. She is the spouse of Christ; for "incorruption bringeth near to God" (Wisd. vi. 20). She is one of those of whom it is written: "They follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Apoc. xiv. 4). Let no one wonder that virgins are compared to the angels, for they are the spouses of the Lord of angels. Thus she lies on the bier, holding the image of her

Spouse close to her bosom. The crucifix is also the sign of her redemption through Christ. "There is no name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Only through Christ and in Christ the soul of the departed found predestination and salvation; hence when laid on the bier, her hands clasp the image of her Beloved.

2. Lighted candles are placed at her feet. This is to indicate that the departed one walked in the light, and may also signify the lamps which the virgins in the Gospel carried (Matt. xxv. 1). They signify the lamp of faith, which the Son of God brought from heaven. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; to them that dwell in the shadow of death a light is risen" (Is. ix. 2). The devout young woman ordered her life according to the light of faith; she professed it before the whole world. These candles also signify the light of virtue in which she walked. Virtue is a shining light whose bright rays illumine the world. "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16). The pious maiden walked in the light of virtue, she shed round about her the light of meekness, the light of humility, the light of chastity, the light of devotion.

Furthermore, these lights indicate that the departed has entered into the eternal light of glory. The courts of heaven are resplendent with the rays of divine beauty; heaven itself may be called a light, for it is the dwelling-place of the "Father of lights." In His presence there can be no darkness or shadow, no cloud can

obscure the brilliance of His countenance. "The city hath no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God enlighteneth it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. And the nations shall walk in the light of it" (Apoc. xxi. 23, 24). Thus we do well to place lighted tapers at the feet of the devout young woman whilst she lies upon the bier; for God has fulfilled His promises to her and has taken her into the joys of life everlasting.

Behold her, then, stretched out upon the bier, decked with all that would indicate what is glorious in her state of life. There she reposes in tranquillity, and the angels of God keep watch by her side. Is it not your earnest desire that your lot may be the same? If you sincerely wish it, you must walk in the fear of God now; you must "think upon the things of the Lord that you may be holy in body and in spirit."

PART II.

1. Though her lips are now closed and her tongue is silent, yet she speaks to us and tells us that all struggle is now past. The dead speak to us in mute yet forceful language; they tell us of the end of the battle of life. This world is a battle-field. Holy Job says: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare, and his days are like the days of a hireling" (Job. vii. 1). A young woman especially has many severe trials and struggles to undergo. Now she lies motionless in the repose of death, and tells us that all is now over. She has encountered many temptations, but now she is at rest.

All suffering is over. This world is a vale of tears.

You, too, no doubt, have your share of sorrow. Listen to the Christian young woman before you; she tells you that all suffering and all sorrows are now past and over. Her path had often been covered with thorns, but now she no longer remembers them, she has entered where there is no sorrow or weeping.

2. All is now won, she cries to us. She has entered into the fair land where the "fountain of life" flows perpetually, that land where reign ceaseless exultation and everlasting joy; where are the thrones of the apostles, the seats of the prophets, where the patriarchs rule and the martyrs rejoice. From that happy land she calls to you, and tells you that all is now won. With joyful voice she exclaims: God is mine, heaven is mine; and they are mine for all eternity.

Listen, Christian young woman, to the voice of your departed sister. All is over, she says, all is won. God grant that you may all one day say the same, and that none be compelled to say: all is over and all is lost. Lost and gone are the pleasures I once enjoyed; past and gone is the pride I cherished in my heart; gone are the flatteries to which I listened with such complacency: all is lost, my soul is lost, my hope of eternal salvation is lost. Let your life be one prayer that you may rather say: all is over and all is won. All the strife, all the sufferings of life are over and gone; heaven is won, God Himself is won; they are mine forever. That this may be your lot, take the advice given by Tobias to his son: "Take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord, our God" (Tob. iv. 6).

18. The Need of Circumspection.

"*See, therefore, how you walk circumspectly.*"—Ephes. v. 15.

THE Apostle of the Gentiles addresses these words to his converts: "See how you walk circumspectly." This admonition is a general one, applying to all and every Christian; for the road by which every earthly pilgrim journeys leads over giddy heights and along dangerous precipices, through the very midst of the enemy's camp. Consequently, if the traveler would avoid falling headlong into the abyss or being cut down by the swords of the enemy, he must walk with the greatest circumspection. Millions who went on their way heedlessly have met with sad accidents or have fallen into the hands of the enemy. The warning of the Apostle is also an individual one, applying especially to you. Do not close your ears to the warning. "See how you walk circumspectly." Circumspection is necessary, because

I. It is very easy to fall;

II. It is very difficult to rise after the fall.

PART I.

1. It is easy to fall, because the fall comes almost imperceptibly. No one becomes suddenly bad; the fall is prepared for by degrees. The flood does not over-

flow the banks without preparation; the waters are seen to rise for days. The conflagration begins with a tiny spark, the flames spread until all is involved in the devastation. In like manner, it rarely happens that a man falls suddenly into grievous sin; generally a gradual decline precedes the final plunge. The downfall into the abyss is often so gradual that you have no suspicion of what is before you. The first step in the wrong direction is easily taken, and after the first the second comes easily.

The first step in the way of iniquity is often taken in early youth. Children hear and see things which they do not clearly understand but which leave the seed of evil in their souls. What at first calls an involuntary blush to the cheek is soon regarded with indifference; when they grow older they are made to listen to conversation unbecoming a Christian. All this strikes at the root of modesty and innocence. The young child becomes a young woman; and her every look and her every word shows that the evil seed has sprung up, that it has grown with her growth, and that it is bringing fruit. By imperceptible steps the youthful heart has forsaken the ways of holiness and has wandered from God.

In addition to this there is another evil consequence: sensuality is awakened. "The thought and imagination of man are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21). The smoldering spark bursts forth into flames, especially if any stimulus is given to it. The heat of passion inflames the heart, even when it is still ignorant of the evil. The growth of the evil serpent is gradual,

but it daily winds its coils around such a heart more firmly. Almost unconsciously the heart becomes a prey to it.

"He that contemneth small things shall fall little by little" (Ecclus. xix. 1). If the water penetrates through a small leak in the ship, little heed is ordinarily paid to it; yet the vessel will fill gradually and the leak will become larger. Drop by drop the poison is instilled into the soul, and an ever-increasing callousness is the result. Impure thoughts and suggestions are resisted but feebly, then one begins to laugh at improper jokes, more freedom is indulged in, improper acquaintances spring up, and before one becomes aware of it the young woman stands before the precipice. The road to ruin is an easy one.

Thus imperceptibly the final downfall is prepared. Have I not every reason to urge you in the words of St. Paul: "See how you walk circumspectly"? Be on your guard, I beseech you. Watch over your thoughts, your eyes, your ears, your steps. Do not give way to the least thing that is impure, no matter how slight it may appear to you. If you doubt about anything, consult your confessor about it. If indifference has already taken hold of you to such an extent that you see no harm in things of an unchaste character, in improper friendships, in indecorous dances, then indeed you have need of being doubly on your guard.

2. The fall for which you have been prepared gradually comes suddenly. This lies in the nature of things. If any one is standing on the very edge of a steep decline, only one more step is needed and he will roll to the

bottom. Add but a few more drops to a goblet already full to the brim, and it will flow over. And if any of you should have gone on to the brink of the precipice, there is every reason for you to fear that your fall is imminent. Take one step, only one step more, and retreat becomes impossible. This last fatal step is generally made under the provocation of a strong temptation. If you are in this condition, reflect a moment; you have not yet given up virtue, but you have shown that you hold it cheap; you are standing at the verge of the abyss. One more dance, one more indulgence in flirtation, may mean your eternal ruin. One more secret meeting, and you shall perhaps yield to temptation. All the more surely will this happen, the more you rely upon yourself. "Lean not upon thy own prudence" (Prov. iii. 5). He who does will surely fall.

Therefore, see how you walk circumspectly. If you are at the brink of the precipice, step back, step back instantly, before it is too late. Make a solemn promise to God to avoid the person, the place, full of danger for you. Break the bonds of that illicit engagement, give back the presents you accepted; "be strong in the grace which is in Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. ii. 1).

PART II.

Walk circumspectly in order to escape falling, for when once you have fallen it is no easy matter to rise again. If any one falls into an abyss, it is but rarely that he escapes from it again; and if you, Christian young woman, fall into sin, you can, it is true, rise

again, but it will be much more difficult than you imagine.

1. The obstacles in the way of rising from sin are formidable. The first of these is a sense of shame. Confession is the only means of rising from sin; now, confession of one's sins is neither easy nor pleasant; and the confession of sins against purity is especially difficult. A feeling of shame often keeps one who has transgressed in this matter away from confession and prevents him from making a clear statement of his guilt. Consequently, such a soul remains in her sins.

Another obstacle in the way of rising from a fall is the strength of passion. If temptation has once been yielded to, the passion courses more freely through the veins, the flame of lust burns more fiercely than before. "The attractions of carnal desires," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "rage like a fire, devour like a lion, swell like a cobra, lie in wait like an assassin, and inflame every member of the body." If resistance to temptation is difficult before the fall, it becomes ten times more difficult after it, especially should it be a question of sins of impurity. "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you may also do well, when you have learned evil" (Jer. xiii. 23).

The third obstacle is the power of hell. By yielding to mortal sin man falls from the embrace of God into the arms of the devil; from being a child of God he becomes a child of the devil. In consequence of this the powers of hell obtain a mastery over him. They can now hurl their darts at him at will, they can bind him with strong cords, and render it almost impossible

for him to return to God. They are anxious not to let their prey escape them, and it is their greatest delight to ruin a soul for all eternity.

Do you imagine that in the face of such obstacles it will be an easy matter for you to rise from a fall? There is another circumstance which renders rising difficult; it is the fact that

2. Your strength is small. What are you able to accomplish by yourself? "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. iii. 5). Alas, how can any one rise again of his own strength? How can one that is so weak burst the bonds that hold him? How can one who is so feeble rise to his feet when a heavy burden is placed on his shoulders? It is the grace of God alone that can do this. "I can do all things," says St. Paul, "in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). But we must remember that God is in no way obliged to give us His grace. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16). But even if God gives us His grace, grace alone does not do the work; you must clasp His paternal hand in yours and co-operate with Him. He gives you a plank in shipwreck, but you must seize it and cling to it. You must spare no effort to do all in your power to rise from the fall.

Rising from sin is no easy matter; St. Thomas asserts that it is especially difficult to rise from sins of impurity. The Fathers agree in saying that it is next to impossible to rise from sins against chastity, if the sins are not recent and have become a habit. Thus

Samson, the man of strength, could burst asunder the cords with which his enemies tied him, but could not break the bonds of his own passions. He set on fire the crops of his adversaries, but he himself was burned by the flames of evil desires.

Am I not right, then, in admonishing you in the words of the Apostle: "See how you walk circumspectly"? It is easy to fall, and difficult to rise from the fall. Be on your guard, lest you fall. He whose path is along a precipice will walk carefully, and will be cautious as to where he sets his foot. This caution is most praiseworthy. You, too, are walking on such a path—see that you walk with the proper caution. "A wise man will fear in everything" (Ecclus. xviii. 27). "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). If, however, some one of you should unfortunately have begun on the downward path, let her retrace her steps immediately; let her ask the assistance of God's grace, which will not be denied her if she is earnest in her desire to rise again. It is easier to do penance than to bear the tortures of hell-fire.

19. Remedies against Pride.

"Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words, for from it all perdition took its origin."—Tob. iv. 14.

THE first sin ever committed upon earth was a sin of pride, and a woman was guilty of it: "God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. . . . The woman took of the fruit thereof, and did eat" (Gen. iii. 5, 6). Since that fatal act was committed pride has dominated the world, and, I may venture to say, holds sway especially over the feminine sex. Pride is diametrically opposed to God, and is the cause of the ruin of many. "Pride is the beginning of all sin, and he that holdeth it shall be filled with malediction, and it shall ruin him in the end" (Ecclus. x. 15). Nothing is so displeasing in the sight of God as pride. On account of pride a great multitude of angels fell from heaven and were hurled into the abyss of hell, on account of pride our first parents were driven out of paradise. Hence it is necessary to warn Christians against this sin, and to provide a salutary medicine for souls sick of this malady, that they may recover from it. The remedy against pride consists in this:

I. To look into the grave;
II. To look up to heaven.

PART I.

1. The grave is the end of all superiority. All worldly advantages the possession of which often makes men think much of themselves "pass away as a vision of the night" (Tob. xx. 8), and shall be "dispersed as a mist which is driven away by the beams of the sun" (Wisd. ii. 3). You need but to look into the open grave, and you will see there the end of all worldly advantage; the advantages of talent, of wealth, of beauty. In the kingdom of death there is absolute equality. "Where," St. Basil asks, "are those who gloried in their high position, in the honor shown them? Where are the unrivaled orators, the dukes and princes, the rulers of the world? Is not all their distinction fictitious and unreal? What are they now but dust? What memorial is left of them but a few bones?" "Search the earth," says St. Ambrose, "open the tombs, and find the rich man if thou canst. If thou recognize him at all, it will be by the grandeur that is decaying with him."

Look down into the grave, Christian young women, you who pride yourselves on your accomplishments, on your beauty, on your dress and ornaments. In a few years all these things which you now think so important shall have passed away and been forgotten. You will be in the grave beside the companion whom you have despised, beside the beggar and the laborer, and if your moldering bones were taken from the grave they would not be distinguishable from theirs. "The fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. vii. 31). Consider this well and you will have no more cause for

pride or conceit; you will cease to boast of your advantages.

2. Look again into the tomb, and you will find cause to humble yourselves. The inhabitant of the tomb is stripped of everything. There the deceased lies despoiled of all that he held dear in life; his property passes into the hands of others; others take possession of his house and belongings. "He shall take nothing away nor shall his glory descend with him" (Ps. xlviii. 18). "They have slept their sleep, and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands" (Ps. lxxv. 6). Your lot will be a similar one. Now you think that you cannot spend too much money on clothes; many a daughter is the worriment of her parents on account of her extravagance; but the day will come when the nothingness of all this vanity will become apparent to you.

The inhabitant of the tomb is forgotten by all but a very few. "Our name in time shall be forgotten and no man shall have any remembrance of our works" (Wisd. ii. 4). This is so true that it is used as a term of comparison: "I am forgotten as one dead" (Ps. xxx. 13). Now we listen with pleasure to the words of flattery, we love to have homage paid to us; but let a few years go by, and the grass will grow over our grave and memory alike.

The inhabitant of the tomb is disfigured beyond recognition. "When a man shall die, he shall inherit worms" (Ecclus. x. 13). The flesh will disappear with all its beauty, and no one will any longer recognize the dead. When the body is decayed completely nothing

remains but a handful of ashes. Now you think so much of your personal appearance, you admire yourselves in the mirror, and your toilette takes up a great deal of your time. In the grave all beauty will disappear, and you will become an object of horror to the beholder.

Look into the grave, and see the miserable state of its occupant. Gaze in imagination upon that hapless individual, denuded of everything that the world holds dear, forgotten by all men, disfigured beyond recognition. Such will be your fate also, and that sooner than you think. You think a great deal of yourselves now, of your ability; you imagine that every one must admire you, must pay you homage. You look with contempt upon others whom you think inferior to yourselves, you cannot bear to be contradicted. O proud heart! look into the grave, and see what you will be. Does the sight that meets your eye there not rebuke your pride?

PART II.

1. Another remedy against pride consists in looking upon the cross on which Jesus expiated the pride of man. Upon the cross we see the incarnate Son of God. He is the only-begotten Son of the heavenly Father, the King of heaven made man. He is the "image of the invisible God, the First-born of every creature" (Col. i. 15), who "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man" (Phil. ii. 7). Thus the God-Man makes atonement for sin, and for the sin of pride

in particular. In arrogance the first man rebelled against God; "you shall be as gods" was the alluring promise of the serpent, and man listened to these words and desired to sit with the Almighty upon the throne. In expiation of that act of pride, the Saviour hangs in agony upon the cross. He suffers to atone for your pride also, for from the father of the race the sin of pride has come down to his children. "Here is a generation whose eyes are lofty, and their eyelids lifted up on high" (Prov. xxx. 13).

Can your haughty spirit bear the sight of the cross as you look upon Jesus? There you behold the God-Man atoning for your pride, for your vanity of dress, your conceit about your mental and personal attractions. He atones for the pride which is the cause of your haughty manner toward your parents and companions, your self-will and obstinacy. Does not the sight of the Son of God doing penance for your sake avail to crush your pride and to inspire you with humble sentiments?

2. Jesus condemns pride. This He does by undergoing the most ignominious punishments. The punishment of the crucifixion was considered most degrading, to it only the worst criminals were subjected. A man who was crucified was held to belong to the outcasts of human society, every one turned away from him in disgust. Hence St. Paul writes: "Christ was made a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13).

Christ suffered ignominy not only by being crucified, but also by the humiliating circumstances of His death.

How great was the depth of the humiliation to which Our Lord descended! His name had gained renown throughout the land of Israel; in all Judea and Galilee there was not a single dwelling, however lowly, whose inhabitants had not heard of the great Prophet who had arisen among the people. Wherever He went crowds flocked to Him, crying: "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxi. 9). Now He hangs upon the cross as one accursed, and a curse rests upon His name.

For the space of three years He preached His Gospel throughout the land, and it was said of Him: "Never did man speak like this Man" (John vii. 46). He created a stir such as none had ever made before Him. Every one desired to hear Him. Whole villages went out and followed Him far into the desert in order to listen to His teaching. And now, behold Him hanging upon the cross and His teaching branded as deception.

Never had the world witnessed such miracles as those performed by Jesus. The Jews said of Him: "No man can do those signs that Thou dost" (John iii. 2). "When the Christ cometh, shall He do more miracles than these which this Man doth?" (John vii. 31). "There are also many other things which Jesus did which, if they were written every one, the world itself would not be able to contain the books that should be written" (*ibid.* xxi. 25). Now behold Him hanging on the cross and His miracles branded as fraud and the works of the devil.

Our Lord's life was one of infinite holiness, and His most inveterate enemies could discover no sin of which

to accuse Him. "Which of you," He asks them boldly, "shall convince Me of sin?" (John viii. 46.) He devoted His whole life to the welfare of His brethren. "He went about doing good" (Acts x. 38). Now behold Him hanging on the cross as a malefactor.

Thus the crucified Redeemer condemns your pride; for it is because of man's pride that He endured this disgrace and humiliation. Can you still allow pride to reign in your heart? Raise your eyes to the cross, whereon the sentence of condemnation against pride is inscribed in characters that none can mistake.

Pride is the ruin of millions. Wherefore "never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words." It is a vice of which it is not easy to divest oneself; the proud man is slow to acknowledge his sin, and even when it is made known to him, he will not recognize it. Alas, that this should be so!

Use the remedies which I have to-day indicated to you; look into the grave, look upward to the cross.

20. True and False Devotion.

"Men shall be lovers of themselves . . . having an appearance of godliness but denying the power thereof."—2 Tim. iii. 2, 5.

God has been pleased to endow the feminine sex with a singular love of prayer; hence we see the women of all ages more frequently and in greater numbers in the house of God than the men. This natural predisposition is a valuable one. Happy they that make good use of it, for by it they may earn an eternal reward. "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things" (Matt. xxv. 23). But the best disposition may deteriorate, a salutary medicine may, in the hands of the ignorant and inexperienced, become a deadly poison. So the love of prayer implanted by God in the heart of women may degenerate into what is evil and become the cause of their eternal damnation. Have you never heard of devotees? No doubt you have heard little good of them. The world goes too far in its condemnation of them, it cannot discriminate between tinsel and true gold, and often blames what is praiseworthy. To-day I will speak to you on this subject, and will try to point out to you the difference between true and false devotion.

I. True devotion is most praiseworthy;

II. False devotion is most blameworthy.

PART I.

1. The Christian young woman who performs her religious duties with true devotion deserves the highest commendation. By devotion I mean prayer, hearing the word of God, receiving the sacraments. Many a pious woman may be found whose devotion is fervent, heartfelt, who obeys the promptings of grace in her soul; and such a one cannot fail to receive our admiration.

God Himself desires true devotion on our part; He requires us to pray. Many and urgent are the commands He lays upon us in this regard. "Let nothing hinder thee from praying always" (Ecclus. xviii. 22). "Take ye heed, watch and pray" (Mark xiii. 3). "Be instant in prayer" (Col. iv. 2). "We ought to pray and not faint" (Luke xviii. 1). God also requires us to hear His word. "Join thyself from thy heart to wisdom that thou mayest hear every discourse of God" (Ecclus. vi. 35). Our Lord commanded His apostles: "Going, therefore, teach all nations; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). In this command to preach to all nations is included the command binding all nations to hear them. God also requires us to receive the sacraments. Jesus instituted them for the benefit of all mankind, and wishes all to avail themselves of them. "Take ye and eat, this is My body" (Matt. xxvi. 26). Thus we see that God requires of us the practice of devotion, and that it is conducive to our eternal salvation.

The Fathers of the Church are unanimous in assert-

ing the power of prayer. St. Chrysostom says that by prayer the earthly nature of man becomes heavenly. St. Augustine calls prayer the key that unlocks heaven. The divine word is also a powerful means of salvation; in fact, it is the source of our spiritual welfare. "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever" (John iv. 3). "How, then, shall they call on Him, in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe Him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear, without a preacher?" (Rom. x. 14.) Likewise, the reception of the sacraments is necessary. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity" (1 John i. 9). "If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever" (John vi. 52).

That which God enjoins upon us, and which is conducive to our salvation, cannot be otherwise than excellent and admirable. Hence one that practises true devotion is deserving of the highest praise.

2. To the practice of devotion should be joined a pious life. A devout and pious life is pleasing in the sight of God; God loves it and desires us to cultivate it. All His commandments tend to this end, to guide us in the way of virtue and sanctity. How beautiful in the sight of God is a Christian young woman whose life is one of chastity, of meekness, of obedience! Such a life is beautiful, not only in the sight of God, but even in the sight of the world. Men admire virtue. Even abandoned sinners retain a love for it in their heart, though they may revile it with their lips. A young woman is universally respected if she performs her

duties diligently, if she is a peacemaker in the family, if she is ever obliging and willing to help others.

That which is beautiful in the sight of God and men is evidently worthy of admiration and praise. This is true devotion, which is "known both with God and men" (Wisd. iv. 1). This devotion is the distinguishing mark of holy souls, of those whose names are in the Book of Life, of the saints at whose head is Mary, the Queen of godly souls. Would that there were many devotees in this sense of the word! Christianity would then flourish more brightly, sanctity would be more common in the family and community. "The fruit of a just man is a tree of life" (Prov. xi. 20). Give yourselves to the practice of piety and devotion, be fervent in prayer, make it your delight to hear the word of God, receive the sacraments frequently. See that you unite a pious life to the practice of devotion. Be chaste, humble, industrious; in a word: "Seek the things that are above. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon earth" (Col. iii. 1, 2).

PART II.

1. Fictitious devotion deserves nothing but censure. "There shall be men having an appearance of godliness." Amongst women especially, one often meets with individuals of this class; they are devotees in the bad sense of the word. They are constantly to be seen in the church, they remain there until every one else is gone. There is never a sermon, never an exercise of devotion, at which they are not present; they go to confession often and communicate most frequently. This

is all very well when it is inspired by true devotion, but with this class it is all an "appearance of godliness"—it is nothing but hypocrisy.

Such conduct deserves the strongest censure, for this false devotion is absolutely valueless. God requires us to give Him our heart and to walk sincerely before Him. On this account, mere exterior practices of religion, however they may deceive men, are without value in His sight; weighed in His balance, they are as light as dust and chaff. "Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips glorify Me, but their heart is far from Me, I will cause an admiration in this people" (Is. xxix. 13, 14). "When you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men: Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward" (Matt. vi. 5). A curse rests on such pretense of devotion, since it is mere hypocrisy. "A perverse heart is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xi. 20). "Dissemblers and crafty men prove the anger of God" (Job xxxvi. 13). "Wo to the Pharisees!" Our Lord cried out. St. Jerome does not hesitate to say that if we compare the two evils, open sin is a smaller offense to God than feigned piety. It is false devotion to perform acts of piety merely to be seen and praised by men.

2. Hypocrisy leads to an ungodly life. It is of those who make a false show of piety that it is said that they "deny the power thereof." St. Paul says of them that they are "lovers of themselves, disobedient, without affection, without peace, slanderers." This is an accu-

rate description of a devotee. These sanctimonious persons have no idea of self-denial. They pay no heed to the admonition: "Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will" (Ecclus. xviii. 30). Neither does the devotee govern her tongue or mortify her palate or check her self-will. "They said: We will go after our own thoughts, and we will do everything according to the perverseness of our heart" (Jer. xviii. 12). Everything must be done as they choose, and if they are thwarted an angry frown rests upon their brow and they observe a sullen silence. One would scarcely believe what parents, brothers, and sisters must suffer from their bad temper. Nor is this the worst. They bring Christianity into contempt by their open sins, whilst still keeping up a semblance of piety. Gossip, self-exaltation, irritability, disobedience, all these are daily faults with them; and sometimes impurity marks the climax.

So ungodly a life deserves the severest censure. How often one hears people revile those who make a great profession of religion! This is not right; but the fault lies with the devotees in the bad sense of this word. Are any of you amongst this class of pretenders? I hope not, but if there should be one, I pity her. Such people flatter themselves that they are living for God and are working out their eternal salvation, but how terribly they deceive themselves! Prayer, church-going, reception of the sacraments, will not make us pious if we do not perform these acts in the right spirit. "Not every one that saith: Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of

My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. vii. 21). "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. ii. 13). The essential thing is to perform your duties in life exactly, and to observe the law of God. Away then with all devotion that does not influence your life for the better, but is a mere means of blinding you to your defects and sins. Away with hypocrisy, away with pretense. Shall I say, away with prayer and the sacraments? By no means. Be assiduous in these things, but do all in the spirit of true devotion. When you leave the church, go home and do your work patiently, be obedient to your superiors, be kind to all, "walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called" (Ephes. iv. 1), and you will be found worthy to enter the marriage-feast of the Lamb.

21. The Service of the World.

"Be not conformed to this world; but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God."—Rom. xii. 2.

You have all heard the admonition of the Apostle in which he bids us not to be conformed to this world. To whom does this warning apply? It applies to every Christian, whatever his calling, whatever his age may be. It applies also in a particular manner to you. Although you live in the world, you are not to serve the world. Unfortunately a great number of young people do not take the admonition of the Apostle to heart, and serve the world. I wish to-day to speak to you on this subject in order to impress the admonition of the Apostle upon your mind. We shall consider

I. How much the service of the world is sought after;

II. How unprofitable it is.

PART I.

1. Many people think of nothing but the service of the world. Their thoughts are directed to one object, to please the world. How is the world to be pleased? By vanity. Where vanity is, there the world is. Many strive to please a vain world, and their thoughts are set

upon things of little real value. The first thought of the worldling in the morning, the last thought at night, and the majority of his thoughts during the day, are occupied with things of dress and external display. The world is to be pleased also by frivolity. Frivolity is an enemy of all that is grave and serious; the maxims of the world are frivolous, its life is a giddy one. Even on the brink of the precipice its votaries dance and make merry, heedless of the divine chastisements which hang over their heads. Those who follow the world in its course of frivolity are praised by it and lauded to the skies. Great is the number of those who strive to please a gay world. They banish all serious thoughts from their mind and pass weighty matters by with a laugh or a song.

Others make it their aim to enjoy the world to the full. On their banner they would inscribe the words: "Come, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let not the flower of time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered, let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury, let us everywhere leave tokens of joy" (Wisd. ii. 6-9). Those who approve of these words and who make the enjoyment of the world their main object in life may be counted by the thousands. They think of nothing but dancing, amusements, dress, and display. They look with covetous eyes at every flower that blossoms on the tree of pleasure, and stretch out their eager hands to pluck it.

Young women form a large proportion of this class. Vanity is found in every woman's nature; hence many are filled with the desire to please the world. This inborn desire to please engenders levity and a craving for excitement. Thus the early aspirations of a girl are often misdirected to the service of the world; she desires nothing but to please and to enjoy the world and its pleasures.

2. Many persons live for the world alone. They admire the maxims of the world. What the maxims of the world are, we are told by the Apostle: "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John ii. 16). Thus the inordinate desire of amusement, the greed for gain, the thirst for distinction, are the compass by which the world steers its course, and the goal of this course is worthy of the laws which it follows. According to the world's code of morals, to enjoy life is the first and highest good, and man can find his happiness, his true destiny upon earth. These principles rule the worldling, not only in the city, but also in the country. Pleasure, avarice, ambition are the gods which they worship. They deceive themselves into believing that man was made for these things and that in them lies their happiness. There are many women among those that adhere to these principles; there are many women who think they exist for dress, dancing, love-making, and the enjoyment of the things of earth.

"The whole world is seated in wickedness" (1 John v. 9). The wickedness wherewith the whole world is

permeated shows itself now and then by its fruits. "It must needs be that scandals come" (Matt. xviii. 7). Scandal spreads like wildfire, evil example is contagious. Wrong-doings once introduced into a circle of young people are copied as rapidly as a new fashion in dress; if a few young women frequent dances, all the others think that they must be there also; if gambling once takes hold of a few young women, they soon outdo the young men of the neighborhood; let a votary of the world once make her appearance amongst the steadier young women of the parish, and before long an atmosphere of levity and vanity pervades the whole community.

The service of the world is in great favor, for a large proportion of men are given to it. Are there any amongst you who are given to the service of the world? Are there any amongst you who love vanity and crave for enjoyment, whose hearts are given to the follies of the world? Examine yourselves in this regard; what are your thoughts and wishes?

PART II.

1. The world's service is not a profitable one, for there are few roses to be gathered in it. What is the praise of men? What is dancing and playing? What are clothes and ornaments? They are things of little value in the eyes of sensible persons. Even these scanty rewards are dealt out sparingly. The world makes great promises, but is slow in fulfilling them, it is false to its most solemn promises. Even were it to shower its presents upon its favorites in abundance, they would

prove of a very perishable nature. "I said in my heart, I will go and abound with delights and enjoy good things. And I saw that this also was vanity" (Ecclus. ii. 1).

Only for a brief time do the trees blossom and look beautiful in spring, then the flowers wither and fall to the ground. So it is with the roses which the world offers its votaries. "The world passeth away and the concupiscence thereof" (1 John ii. 17). The pleasures of the world pass away quickly, "like the shadow and like the post that runneth on, like a ship that passeth through the waves, or as when a bird flieth through the air, of the passage of which no mark can be found, or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, as when dust is blown away with the wind, and as thin froth which is dispersed by the storm, and as the remembrance of the guest of one day" (Wisd. v. 9-12, 15). Is this not true? Look at the past. How soon that dance was over, how soon those flattering words were forgotten, how soon that sinful pleasure came to an end! Beauty fades, riches take wings to themselves, disease destroys all enjoyment, everything vanishes and passes away like a shadow.

2. The world demands great sacrifices from its followers; an iron yoke is laid upon their necks. In order to please the world, one must bid farewell to peace of conscience, many hours of the day and the night must be sacrificed and not unfrequently liberty of thought and of action must be offered at its shrine. What hardships men undergo to acquire wealth, honors, applause! A young woman who wishes to please the world makes

the greatest sacrifices; she must follow the latest fashions, no matter how senseless they may be. Listen to the prophet describing the fashions of his day: "Chains and necklaces and bracelets and bonnets and jewels hanging on the forehead" (Is. iii. 19). Fashion makes slaves of its followers. What sacrifices are not implied in a clandestine love-affair! What disturbance of the peace of mind, what pangs of conscience!

Moreover, much suffering is endured for the sake of the world. The world is an ocean in which the billows of affliction run high. He who serves the world must swallow many a bitter draught. The honey of the world has a rich flavor of gall. St. Augustine uses the following illustration: "When a fish sees the bait, he swallows it eagerly. But as soon as the angler begins to draw on the line, the fish is made aware that he is a captive, and testifies by great exertions to escape that the pleasure is at an end. So it is with mankind in regard to this world. They enjoy the good things fortune offers them, and consider themselves lucky; but their happiness is of brief duration, ere long the things in which they delighted prove a source of suffering and vexation." The joys of the world appear sweet, but when tasted leave a bitter taste behind. Sharp pangs of conscience follow, together with other consequences of a more serious nature. "Many are the scourges of the sinner" (Ps. xxxi. 10).

If the service of the world brings sorrow and suffering even in this life, what shall we say of the future? "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend

of this world becometh an enemy of God" (James iv. 4). What awaits the enemy of God in the next world? Truly their destiny is a sad one, weeping and everlasting pain.

You see what the service of the world really involves. It attracts many, and rewards them ill. Who would like to take a position which is arduous, accompanied with tears and suffering, for which there would be punishment instead of reward? "Be not conformed to this world." Follow my counsel, and you will have reason to rejoice when the angel of death summons you to depart.

22. The Dangers of the Dance.

"*The daughter of Herodias danced before them.*"—Matt. xiv. 6.

YOUNG people love to enjoy themselves. Is this sinful? By no means. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart be in that which is good in the days of thy youth" (Ecclus. xi. 9). However, all amusements are not lawful; there are diversions which are more or less dangerous for the spiritual welfare, and for this reason should be avoided. This is especially true of dancing. Listen to what I have to say to you to-day on this subject, and you will be able to see for yourselves the danger that is to be found in this sort of amusement. Dancing is

I. Accompanied with many dangers;
II. And is very harmful.

PART I.

1. That dancing is dangerous is attested by good witnesses. Even the ancients who were not Christians judged harshly of dancing. Cicero, a pagan, says: "No one will dance, whether when alone or in company of disorderly revellers, unless he is either intoxicated or a mere simpleton." "Dancing is a vicious practice and leads to every sort of vice." Ovid, another pagan writer, says that places where

dancing goes on are "places where modesty makes shipwreck"; and in another place he says that joining a dance is "sowing seeds of vice." Bayle, a professed atheist, says: "Dancing only tends to sully the purity of the heart, and is a formidable foe to chastity." Count Bussy-Rabatin, a man well known in the literary world, says: "I have always regarded dancing as a dangerous amusement. Not only my reason but experience has led me to the conclusion; and with all respect to the testimony of the Fathers on this point, I think that the testimony of a man of the world ought to have more weight with the general public. I am fully aware that the danger is far greater for some individuals than for others; some run no risk in going to dancing-halls, although the coolest temperaments are heated in a certain measure. As a rule, the young people who frequent assemblies where dancing goes on are those who, when alone, seldom have the force to resist temptation; how much more severely is their power tried when they are excited by the giddy dance! Therefore, in my judgment, I consider it unwise for Christians to go to halls and dancing-salons."

The judgment of those enlightened by faith coincides with the witnesses already quoted. Holy Scripture says: "Use not much the company of her that is a dancer, and hearken not to her, lest thou perish by the force of her charms" (Ecclus. ix. 4). "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play," i. e., to dance (1 Cor. x. 7) (see also Ex. xxxii. 19; Job xxi. 12).

"Who," St. Ephrem asks, "can assert on the authority of Holy Scripture that dancing is right for the Christian; what prophet teaches this doctrine? What Evangelist confirms it? In which of the Epistles does one find a single approbation of it? If diversions of such a character are said to be permissible, we will have to say that the law is wrong, the prophets are mistaken, that there are errors in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles. If the contents of the sacred books are true and inspired by God, as in truth they are, it cannot be lawful for Christians to take part in such amusements." St. Augustine is still more severe: "Quod saltus tot [illegible]ssus ad infernum." St. Francis de Sales says: "The fact that such festivities are held in the night is in itself sufficient reason to render them dangerous. Dangerous intimacies are the usual result from them. I say of dances what physicians say of fungi: the best are worthless. So it is with dancing; even when harmless, they have no value. Fungi are said to have the power of drawing the poison of snakes, if they come near them, and these nocturnal gatherings seem to have the power of drawing sins in their train. They give rise to jealousies, to unbecoming jokes, quarrels, love-affairs. The imagination is enkindled and the heart is opened to voluptuous desires. Little more is needed, only a bold word, an improper caress, a licentious look, to sully the soul, which on such occasions is apt to absorb the poison."

The Church has never approved of dances, and in earlier ages expressly prohibited them. This was

done at the Council of Constantinople, of Laodicea, of Lerida. The Synod of Aix-la-Chapelle declares them a disreputable amusement; and the Synod of Tours calls them a snare of the devil.

2. The testimony of our own eyes will tell us the same. Cast a glance into a place where dancing is going on. How much you will see there which cannot fail to do harm! Young men and young women in each other's arms, in a position in which they would not be seen at any other time without a blush. Add to this the excitement of the music, perhaps strong drinks, the intoxication of high spirits. Freedom of speech is allowed, doubtful remarks pass unchecked. The whirl of the giddy dance stirs the blood, causing it to course through the veins more freely. The impropriety of the dress which fashion demands in some places is but calculated to provoke the passions. Put all this together and listen to the words of the Apostle: "I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say in my flesh, that which is good" (Rom. vii. 18). What conclusion will you come to from what you have seen? Surely every unprejudiced person must say that the dance is not a proper amusement for a pure-minded young woman.

PART II.

1. Dancing is harmful to yourself. Apart from all other considerations, dancing is apt to lead to sins of unchastity; it is the source of immodest thoughts, desires, words, looks, familiarities; are not all these things sinful? And very often dancing has been the

cause of more serious falls. For this reason the Doctors of the Church denounce dancing-halls as temples of impurity. "Dancing," says St. Ambrose, "strikes a death-blow at innocence and consigns chastity to the grave." What takes place after the dance? Many are restrained from saying or doing aught that is wrong in the dancing-hall, where they are observed; but this restraint is removed when the dance is over. The dancer sees his partner home, they are both excited by the dance, they are both young and thoughtless; experience tells us only too plainly what dangers lie in wait for them on their way home. Many a young woman has had cause to regret the folly of such a dance.

Dancing is prejudicial to the physical health. The dance heats the blood and produces violent thirst, cold drinks are taken with eagerness, the dancers go out into the chilly night-air, and severe illness results. Many a young woman can date the beginning of consumption from a dance. Some pay for the pleasure of a dance with their lives. Many a time death has stalked into the dancing-hall and has claimed his victim from the midst of the revellers. "Their children dance and play, they take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell" (Job xxi. 11).

2. Dancing is attended with harm for others. You may be an occasion of sin for your partner in the dance. "Many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire" (Ec-

clus. ix. 9). You come to the dance decked out with ornaments, full of mirth and light-heartedness, your dress is not as modest as it should be; is not all this intended to be a snare for your partner? Shall you not give scandal to others? In the day of the last judgment, when the secrets of the heart are revealed, it will be made manifest to you that you have been the instrument of the devil to cast souls into hell-fire.

Dancing is also attended with harm for the spectators. What do they see? Much at which they may take scandal. The coldest, most unimpressionable, hearts are human still and not beyond danger. Who knows but that a stray spark may find lodgment in the heart of the spectator and enkindle there the fire of impurity. Not unfrequently even children are allowed to look on, when a dance is in progress. This practice sows the seed of sin in their hearts at an early period, which will bring forth its fruit in due time. Who will answer for all the evil done in this manner? Will not you also be responsible, if you take part in such a dance? "Woe to the man by whom the scandal cometh" (Matt. xviii. 7). "It were better that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea" (*ibid.* xvi. 6). The evil which you do to others by frequenting dances will be recorded against you, and you will have to answer for it on the last day.

Have I said too much, have I spoken too strongly on this subject? I cannot withdraw my words. Con-

sider once more the reasons which I gave you for saying that the dancing-hall is a dangerous place for you and others. Will you have the courage to resolve to avoid it in the future? May God enlighten your understanding and strengthen your will to this resolve. You will be spared many pangs of conscience by it; and when the time of your departure from this life comes, your death will be the more peaceful for it. But, you ask, is dancing always sinful? By no means; I have not asserted that it is. Yet I must in all truthfulness say that it is more often sinful than harmless. Dancing very easily becomes an occasion of sin, and when it is prolonged to the early hours of the morning, and is free to all comers, it is seldom without danger. Join, if you will, in a dance in a respectable house, among your friends, but avoid the public dance-hall.

I will conclude with the reflections of St. Francis de Sales: 1. Reflect that many are now in hell, enduring endless torments for the sins committed during or after the dance. 2. Reflect that while you were in the ballroom, many pious persons were on their knees, weeping for their sins. 3. Reflect that whilst you were bound to amuse yourself, thousands were suffering the greatest torments from painful diseases, whilst others were departing from this life. 4. Reflect that many of your thoughts, desires, and volitions were not pleasing to God and His holy angels. 5. Reflect that whilst you were thoughtlessly enjoying yourself, you were dancing towards eternity.

23. The Dangers of Company-keeping.

"Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent, for if thou comest near them they will take hold on thee, and the teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men."—Ecclus. xxi. 2, 3.

You have heard the words of Holy Scripture, dictated by the Spirit of God: "Flee from sins." A traveler starts back in alarm at the sight of a snake lying in his path, darting its forked tongue at him with an ominous hiss. He is yet more affrighted at the sight of a lion, standing in the way before him, showing a formidable array of glistening teeth. If possible he takes to flight. Sin is a greater danger than a snake or a lion; they can kill the body only, but sin kills the soul, man's noblest possession. Wherefore flee from sins. I do not hesitate to say that for you more danger of sin comes from illicit company-keeping than from any other source. For this reason I wish to give you an earnest warning on this subject. We shall consider

I. The dangers of such acquaintances,
II. The difficulty of breaking them off.

PART I.

1. The dangers of such intimacies may be judged from their results. The first of these is disquietude of mind. Peace and tranquillity abandon the heart of

one who gives free reins to sensual inclinations. There is a feeling of unrest which precedes sin and ought to serve you as a warning. The restlessness which arises from friendships of this kind is a warning of the proximity of sin. These are the cares of the world of which Our Lord spoke.

Another consequence are the wounds inflicted on the conscience. Dangerous intimacies are the darts which the devil plunges into the souls of those who form them. Listen to St. Francis de Sales: "Love-affairs of this nature give rise to all manner of temptations and distractions; they evoke jealous suspicions and much else that is inimical to peace of mind, so that the heart is completely wrecked and shattered by them." St. Alphonsus writes in a similar manner of them: "I speak advisedly when I say that, as a general rule, those who form these amorous friendships can rarely avoid the proximate occasion of sin. Experience also proves that the greater number are led into mortal sin. If they do not fall at the outset, they do so as time goes on. The intimacy commences with a mutual attraction. Then love becomes a passion, and when the passion takes a firm hold on the heart, it leads to a thousand sins, impure thoughts, unseemly words and actions." "Behold how small a fire what a great wood it enkindleth!" (James iii. 5.) How many wounds the conscience receives! It would require almost the virtue of an angel to escape from such a furnace.

Such acquaintances plant thorns in your way. I have already spoken of the wounds of the conscience,

these cause pain to the soul like thorns that rankle in the flesh. Other thorns spring up in abundance; jealousies, upbraidings on the part of parents, anger and distress, sometimes open disgrace. All these things are thorns that inflict painful wounds. Even should marriage follow such a courtship, it rarely brings true happiness. Experience teaches that where the acquaintance before marriage has not been without blame, mutual distrust and sorrow invariably accompany the parties into the married state.

2. Such friendships rob you of many valuable treasures. Many lose their innocence by them. "Illicit acquaintances are the arena where chastity receives the death-blow," says St. Jerome. First comes levity, then sensuality, then the fall into the abyss of sin. Instances of this are unhappily not rare; they are to be found within the remote village, far removed from the busy world. Thus that which is most precious is lost, like a gallant ship which is swallowed up by the waves of the sea. Many a young woman loses her good name on account of such friendships; and "A good name is better than all riches" (Prov. ii. 1). No man of integrity thinks much of a young woman who is seen continually in the company of young men. No confidence is placed in such a one.

Such intimacies rob you of everything that is intended for your happiness in this life and in the next. The conscience is disturbed, and the rest of mind is gone. Does not every one that has formed such a friendship feel that the fair sunshine, whose peaceful beams brightened the days of her innocence, has

departed? And when the time comes to leave this world, how the remembrance of these days falls like a shadow upon the soul!

Let us look beyond the grave. Many a one who has engaged in such a love-affair during life is robbed of that special crown given to chaste souls. A garland of the greatest lustre is given to souls as a reward of chastity, but reprehensible acquaintances have sullied the purity of many, and they are deprived of this special mark of honor in heaven. Many, too, lose heaven itself by them. But one mortal sin suffices to make us unworthy of the kingdom of the elect. And to how many mortal sins such company-keeping ordinarily leads! Too often it paves the way to the depths of impurity, where mortal sins are drunk in like water. Such a one, if she die in her sins, will find the gates of heaven closed against her. "Know you this that no fornicator or unclean person hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephes. v. 5). Countless are those who are now in eternal darkness on account of illicit friendships which they entered into so lightly.

PART II.

1. It is very difficult to break off such relations. Consider two points: first the consequences which result from them. When the passion has become strong it clouds the understanding. "Their own malice blinded them" (Wisd. ii. 21). People who are in love see only the roses which bloom round

about them, of the thistles they see nothing; to their dazzled eye all is sunshine. Even grave faults in those with whom they are infatuated seem virtues.

Then, again, the heart is no longer master of itself. Looks are exchanged, words are spoken which enkindle the affections, attentions are reciprocally given and taken. Then passion awakes in its might and holds the heart captive in fetters of iron. The Holy Spirit graphically describes this: "Behold a woman meeteth him—the simple young man—a woman prepared to deceive souls, talkative and wandering. She entangleth him with many words and drew him away with the flattery of her lips. Immediately he followeth her as an ox led to be a victim and as a lamb playing the wanton; not knowing that he is drawn like a fool to bonds till the arrow pierce his liver" (Prov. vii. 10-24). Consider further

2. The events of daily life. All warnings are useless; not the slightest heed is paid to the admonitions of parents; the father, the mother, are anxious to save their daughter from the danger she is in, but all is in vain. The warnings of the preacher and of the confessor are neglected in like manner. Such persons have become like the "deaf asp that stoppeth her ears" (Ps. lvii. 5). "They hearkened not, but hardened their necks" (4 Kings xvii. 14). Is this the case with you?

Again, external events are of no use to awaken them to a realization of their condition. Sickness comes to such persons, they go to confession, they are sorry for the sins committed, they promise to give

up the dangerous company; but health returns and with it the old life. Is this true or is it fiction?

Now what is the fruit to be gained from to-day's instruction? You have seen that these intimacies formed so easily have sad results; that the loss of all that is most sacred and sublime is risked by them; nay, that oftentimes it is wantonly cast aside. O happy those whose hearts are not thus enslaved! Keep yours free from such entanglements; for if you are once ensnared, it is not easy to free yourselves. "Watch and pray." But if you have already formed some attachment, if it has gone on for some time, what is to be done? Burst your bonds, break your fetters this very hour. But you will say that this is a difficult matter. Difficult it certainly is, but it is the only means for your salvation. "If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off; if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out." To have one's hand or foot cut off, to have one's eye plucked out, is not an easy matter; yet people submit to the operation, when it is a question of saving their life. How much the more ready ought you to be to make a sacrifice for the sake of your eternal salvation! "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" (Mark viii. 36.)

But is it wrong to receive the addresses of a young man and to become engaged to him? By no means; I have spoken of intimacies of a different character, of those that are entered into without any thought of marriage; or, at all events, with little prospect of it. I have spoken of engagements that seem to be per-

petual, in which the lovers meet frequently and alone. Of engagements where young people meet at times, who are to be married within a reasonable time, the Christian code of morals has nothing that is opposed to them, provided those meetings are not secret and not too frequent. It is perfectly proper that young people should become acquainted with each other's character before marriage; but all that Christian virtue requires should be observed at such meetings. They are quite different from the foolish company-keeping that is only too common, where a young woman keeps company with various young men for years without the first thought of marriage. Such intimacies are to be censured in the strongest terms.

24. Wolves in Sheep's Clothing.

"*An enemy speaketh sweetly with his lips, but in his heart he hath in wait to throw thee into the pit.*"—Ecclus. xii. 15.

It is sad to think of the multitude and the greatness of the dangers to which young people are exposed. Unhappily too many fail to resist temptation, and fall away from God, the supreme good, to become the prey of the devil. Speaking of false prophets Our Lord says: "They will seduce many" (Matt. xxiv. 5). "Among my people are found wicked men, that lie in wait as fowlers, setting snares and traps to catch men" (Jer. v. 26). You, too, have to fear these dangers; you, too, are threatened by them. As the hawk pursues the dove, as the wolf lies in wait for the lamb, so ungodly men seek to ensnare you. They are tempters who do the devil's work, trying to ruin souls. I cannot protect you against them; the world is full of them; but I can warn you against them; and this I intend to do to-day. I shall point out to you

I. How they approach you;
II. The evil work which they accomplish.

PART I.

1. They come in sheep's clothing. This is the outward appearance which they assume. What is meant by this? It means that they come as flatterers. "The

enemy speaketh sweetly with the lips." "They admire persons for gain's sake" (Jude 16). "They call evil good and good evil; they put darkness for light and light for darkness; they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Is. v. 20). They meet you with honeyed words. They whisper into your ears what they know will please you. They praise your person, your skill, your industry, your modesty. This is all vain deceit, empty words. They know well that you will gladly listen to such speeches, and that you will be caught by them as easily as is the bird in a net. Moreover, they come with attractive promises on their lips. "Come," they say, "let us enjoy the good things that are present and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let not the flowers of time pass by; let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered" (Wisd. ii. 6-8). They promise you earthly happiness; they promise you that you shall marry well, and want for nothing; they promise you the fulfilment of your heart's desires. The tempters know only too well that when sweet words fail to produce the desired effect, specious promises will infallibly prevail and bring the heart into subjection.

They come wearing the mask of hypocrisy. They imitate Satan, of whom we know that he will transform himself into an angel of light when there is question of accomplishing his purpose (2 Cor. xi. 13). They not unfrequently make a show of virtue and piety; their conversations are in the beginning full of edification and religious sentiments. How modest, too, and how proper their behavior is, when they wish to deceive the

innocent and the virtuous! They become regular churchgoers and approach the sacraments frequently. Thus they assume the appearance of an angel of light; and unfortunately they succeed in deceiving their prey.

2. Under the appearance of sheep they are really wolves. What is the wolf's nature? Holy Scripture speaks of "wolves ravening the prey to shed blood" (Ezech. xxii. 27). Thus the heart of the wolf is bent upon plundering and ravaging the sheepfold, and the heart of the tempter is set upon destruction. His desire is to cause virtue to fall, and to gain this end he leads you to forsake the way of godliness.

As long as one clings to God, nothing can cause his destruction. Hence the tempter makes it his object to lead you away from Him. With fair and specious words he strives gradually to undermine your love of God and your confidence in Him; he begins by lessening your respect for the priesthood, by speaking slightingly of religious exercises, by throwing doubts upon the efficacy of prayer. He strives to lead you away from the path of simplicity, of humility, of purity, and undermine your faith. "The mouth of the wicked overfloweth with evils" (Prov. xv. 28).

The tempter leads you into the way of hell. This way is sin, for "The devil sinneth from the beginning" (1 John iii. 8). The way of hell is the way of sin, and the tempter strives to lead you into it. His arguments are most specious; "How can that be sinful which proceeds from love?" "How can that be sinful which God planted into the heart of man?" "How can that be sinful which does no one any harm?" or

"You can make it right again in confession"; such are the arguments which he uses to induce you to commit sin, and to cast the love of God from you. The tempter may even say that he will take the responsibility upon his conscience, as though each one were not responsible to God for his own doings. By such and similar means, the tempter leads the souls of the innocent into the way that leads to hell.

Thus we see that the tempter approaches his victim in the clothing of sheep, but his heart is that of a wolf. Perhaps some of you have met persons of this description. Have you never entered upon friendships of which you had reason to be ashamed? Are you still bound by such bonds?

PART II.

You have all seen the lightning; you know how it blights and destroys whatever it strikes. You know what havoc fire works, whatever it touches it reduces to ashes. You know what calamity a flood will bring over a country; how it lays waste the fields and reduces gardens to a wilderness. The mischief done by the tempter is infinitely greater. He casts souls into the bottomless pit, and ruins them forever. Wo to her that falls into his hands!

1. She loses all that is most precious. She will lose the crown of innocence which hitherto shone upon her brow as a garland of purest gold. The crown of innocence entitles the wearer to sit at the eternal banquet of heaven, the marriage-feast of the Lamb; it renders her worthy "to follow the Lamb whithersoever

He goeth." But if she listens to the voice of the tempter, if she yields to his persuasions, the wreath that marked her innocence withers and dies, never to revive again. Tears of penance cannot bring it back; it is lost, and lost forever.

Moreover, the soul that yields to the tempter loses her peace of conscience. When sin enters the soul all tranquillity departs, just as the light fades away at the approach of night. Grief and self-reproach fill the soul, remorse and fear torment her. It is said of the sinner: "The sound of dread is always in his ears; and when there is peace, he always suspecteth treason" (Job xv. 21). David said of himself: "There is no peace for my bones because of my sins" (Ps. xxxvii. 4). Such a soul asks of herself, what hast thou done, and for what reason hast thou done it? Never again will she know peace.

Finally, through wilful sin the soul loses the friendship of God. In His incomprehensible charity God stoops down to the innocent soul and embraces her in His love. "I love those that love Me" (Prov. viii. 17). By yielding to temptation the friendship and love of God are lost. God, who abhors sin from His inmost being, withdraws from the sin-stained soul; and when He withdraws His presence, all His angels depart with Him, and from that time forward such a soul is an object of horror. But the measure of evil is not yet full. Not only does the soul lose all her most precious possessions, but

2. She is also hurled into the depth of misery. Of her it may be said what the prophet said of Jerusalem:

"How hath the Lord covered with obscurity the daughter of Sion in His wrath! How hath He cast down from heaven to the earth the glorious one of Israel!" (Lam. ii. 5). "The Lord is become as an enemy. He hath cast down Israel headlong, He hath overthrown the walls thereof, He hath destroyed her strongholds, and hath multiplied in the daughter of Juda the afflicted, both men and women" (*ibid.* v. 5, 7). Here we have an image, depicted in true colors, of the soul that has fallen into sin. The heavenly lamp is extinguished and the altars of God are in ruins in that soul. Everywhere is abomination and desolation. The blessing of God is changed to a curse, the name of the unhappy soul is erased from the Book of Life. Unless repentance comes, the final portion of that soul will be hell for all eternity. Then, indeed, wretchedness will come and misery indescribable and endless; "The smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever" (Apoc. xiv. 11).

You know now what appearance the tempter takes to seduce you; you know, too, the harm that he will do you. Let this instruction be a warning for you, let it serve to save you from so sad a fate. Be on your guard against those who seek to lead you astray. "Hearken not to the words of the prophets that prophesy to you and deceive you; they speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of God" (Jer. xxiii. 16). Be on your guard against those who come to you in sheep's clothing and inwardly are ravening wolves. Do not believe or trust the flatterer. Beware how you accept the attentions of strangers; beware of

acquaintances which you keep secret from your parents. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, if they be of God" (1 John iv. 1). And since you cannot trust your own judgment in these matters, consult your parents, your confessor, lest you be deceived.

25. The Lost Crown.

"Behold I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."—Apoc. iii. 11.

We read in the Apocalypse that Our Lord addressed this warning to the bishop of the Christian community at Philadelphia: "Behold I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." These words were intended to remind the prelate in question that the end of his life was drawing close; and at the same time, to call upon him to hold fast to the doctrine of Christ, lest he fail to obtain the crown prepared for him. Our Lord addresses the self-same warning to you, Christian young women, He addresses each one of you individually: "Behold I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Our Lord will come; He will come very soon. Life is short and fleeting; it vanishes as quickly as the clouds that drift over the sky, as the waters of a rushing stream. Cling to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, watch, pray and struggle, lest the crown prepared for you be snatched from you. The crown in question is

I. Lost very easily; and

II. If lost, cannot be regained.

PART I.

The crown of which we speak is the crown of virginity. It is the fairest of all virtues, and causes the

soul to shine with a beauty of its own; it is a regal diadem worthy of the greatest monarch. "Every virgin," says St. Ambrose, "is a queen." This crown is, however, easily lost.

1. It is easily lost because the enemies who seek to deprive you of it are many in number. They are, in the first place, the spirits of hell. Although hell lays snares and traps for all, yet the downfall of virginity is one of their principal aims. The prince of darkness hates chastity as the principal obstacle to his domination over souls, and by its destruction he obtains the greatest number of victims. Hence he prowls about like a roaring lion seeking to devour the virtuous and the chaste. The temptations wherewith he assails them are manifold; he will even transform himself into an angel of light to accomplish his purpose. He sends out his emissaries that they may assist him in his evil work of destruction. These spirits of darkness approach the innocent, filling their minds with evil suggestions and imaginings. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Ephes. vi. 12). Hence the fierce conflicts that often take place in the hearts of the pure.

Another of the adversaries of virginity is the world with its wickedness. The world is a declared enemy of virginity, for the world is subservient to the lust of the flesh, and consequently strives to drag the beautiful garland that adorns the brow of the Christian young woman into the mire. To accomplish this, it employs

a thousand arts. At one time it flatters, at another it rebukes, now it praises, and again it blames; it professes affection, and then again gives proof of hatred; it makes promises, and then again it persecutes. All these things are calculated to mislead the innocent and the virtuous.

How easily that crown is lost, when so many enemies are bent on destroying it! These enemies are ever on the alert, they are artful beyond conception, and powerful beyond the strength of unaided nature. They gloat over their victories and rejoice at the misery of their victims. Year after year the number of their victims grows, and the havoc they work is appalling.

2. This crown is easily lost because the owner of it herself casts it from her. This she does by her negligence. The number of the enemies is exceedingly great, and for this reason great watchfulness is required to protect the treasure which the Christian young woman possesses. Holy Scripture bids them "watch and pray." Unhappily, many seem not to understand the meaning of Christian vigilance. They do not guard their senses, and the enemy gains an easy entrance into their heart. They do not watch over their eyes, their ears, their lips. Hence they easily fall a prey to temptation.

The precious crown is lost because the owner does not pray. Man needs the assistance of divine grace to avoid sin; and God has ordained that His grace be received in answer to prayer. Hence we are told in Holy Scripture, "Ask and you shall receive," "Pray at all times." Yet there are many who pray little or

pray without attention, in a careless, negligent manner. They readily omit their morning and evening prayers; they forget God in the time of temptation. And when they do pray their prayers are cold and formal, their hearts are in the world, and a thousand distracting thoughts occupy their minds. God withdraws His grace from such a one, and the devil finds an easy victim. The crown of virginity is lost because of the negligence and the carelessness of the wearer.

This crown is easily lost on account of the frivolity and thoughtlessness of the young. They give little heed to the warnings and exhortations of those placed over them. God admonishes them through their parents, through their confessor; but "They do not hear nor incline their ear" (Jer. xvii. 23). They see what indifference leads to in the case of others, they see companions and friends fall by the wayside, they see their sin and misery, they see their tears and repentance; and yet they will not see any danger for themselves. Who can wonder that such heedlessness should be punished by a disgraceful fall?

Again, you are liable to fall because you think yourself better than others. You say to yourself, There is no danger for me to go to dances, there is no danger for me in this or that company—I shall certainly never do anything wrong or sinful. Remember that "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Prov. xxviii. 26). Mark the one that falls the soonest, and you will see that it is one who trusted in herself and was proud in her own strength.

PART II.

1. The crown of virginity once lost cannot be regained, no matter how you may seek it. An earthly treasure that is lost may be found again by diligent search. The woman in the Gospel spared no pains or labor in her search for the groat which she had lost, and to her great delight she found it again. But it is quite different with the crown of which we are speaking; you may seek for it day and night, you may travel from one end of the world to the other, if this treasure is lost, it is lost forever. Bitter tears cannot bring it back. Even if such a one could say with Job: "My harp is turned to mourning and my organ into the voice of them that weep" (Job xxx. 31), or with the Psalmist: "I will water my couch with tears; my eye is troubled through indignation" (Ps. vi. 8), yet all is in vain.

2. It cannot be regained, no matter what you may be willing to give for it. For the recovery of this crown you may sacrifice all worldly possessions, and give up all the joys of earth, you may retire to a lonely cave, there to weep for your sins to the end of your days; and yet you could not be numbered among those that are virgins and "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." You may give up all and go from door to door to beg the necessaries for life for yourself and the poor, you may serve the sick in the hospitals and obtain many other graces from God; yet the crown which was lost could not be restored.

Life itself cannot be given to regain it. Life is unquestionably the greatest natural gift we have; yet

not even this can purchase the crown of chastity. If one that had lost this crown should die for the faith and be honored as a martyr, yet the special crown of the virgin would be denied her in heaven. Eternal felicity would be hers, yet she would not be allowed to sing the canticle before the throne of which St. John speaks in the Apocalypse (xiv. 3).

Unfortunately, many that lose this crown do not repent; they do not retire from the world to serve God in solitude, or to serve Him in His poor. Countless will be the number of those who will stand on the last day in the sight of all people and will be compelled to say of the just: "These are they whom we had some time in derision and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their lives madness and their end without honor. Behold how they are numbered among the true children of God, and their lot is among the saints" (Wisd. v. 3, 4, 5). Watch over the treasure which you possess, lest it be taken from you. Watch with the vigilance of a miser guarding his gold. "Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41). "Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates and waiteth at the posts of my doors" (Prov. viii. 34). Remember that the Lord warns you: "Behold I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

26. Sorrow that Comes too Late.

"*I have labored in my groanings.*"—Ps. vi. 71.

In the course of human life it often happens that one feels keen regret for the past. The Psalmist calling to mind his sad fall, exclaims in anguish of mind: "I have labored in my groanings; every night will I wash my bed, I will water my couch with my tears." Many a man has felt the same; he has felt that he would give all his worldly possessions, yes, a part of his life, if he could but blot out certain happenings in the past. In such a case grief and sorrow come too late. Have you ever experienced this? Is there some burden that weighs on your conscience, an occurrence which, were it possible, you would fain obliterate from your life? Let us speak of this remorse to-day.

I. When does it begin?

II. What is to be thought of it?

PART I.

1. Such remorse begins when the Christian turns away from God. It begins when you turn a deaf ear to the exhortations which God addresses to you. He Himself warns you by means of your own conscience. "In every work of thine regard thy soul in faith" (Ecclus. xxxii. 27). By that interior voice God speaks to you. Your conscience admonishes you in general to

avoid evil and to do good; it admonishes you in particular, when you are about to commit sin. When the tempter addresses you, your conscience says: "Walk not thou with them; restrain thy foot from their paths" (Prov. i. 10). If you do not listen to this voice, you will some day experience that sorrow which comes too late. God warns you further by various other means. He exhorts you through your parents, your superiors, your confessor, the preacher of the word of God. Their voice is His voice; Christ told His apostles: "He that heareth you, heareth Me" (Luke x. 16). If you pay no heed to their words, sorrow will come upon you in the future.

You will also have cause for sorrow, if you turn away from the means of salvation which God places at your disposal. One of these is prayer. There is a wonderful potency in prayer, enabling the Christian to combat successfully the world, the flesh and the devil. "Pray that you enter not into temptation." "If you desire to overcome temptation," says St. Bonaventure, "to discern the wiles of the devil and to escape his toils, give yourself to prayer." He who does not pray is certain to fall. You, too, will fall into sin, if you do not pray, and remorse will follow the fall. Another means offered us is frequent holy communion. It is the source of all grace, since it contains the Author of grace; it renders the weakest mortal invincible. When Our Lord has taken possession of our souls, He suppresses the law of sin in our members and extinguishes the heat of passion. If you turn away from this means of salvation, if you seldom approach the table of the

Lord, you will be sure to succumb in the time of temptation, and many tears will be the result of your fall.

2. Repentance will come too late, if you seek the friendship of the world. You will be overwhelmed with much sorrow if you listen to the world's promises and allurements. The world is deceitful, and to entice souls she presents many false pictures to them. "Among my people are found wicked men that lie in wait as fowlers, setting snares and traps to catch men" (Jer. v. 26). The individuals here referred to are the children of the world, who endeavor with all manner of sweet words, with promises and vows, to lead you from the way of God and to rob you of your most precious possession. Wo betide you if you listen to them; "With their tongues they asked deceitfully" (Ps. xiii. 3). The fish swallows with eagerness the bait which is put before it, but soon the angler pulls the line, and it perceives that it is caught. It flounders and writhes, but it is all in vain; its efforts come too late. The same will happen in your case, if you take the bait which the world holds out to you. You will soon feel the smart of the barbed hook in your conscience, and when it is too late you will bitterly repent and grieve over what you have done.

You will prepare sorrow for yourself if you court the dangers of the world. "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life." How many are the dangers that surround you! In such a surrounding a cohort of angels is required to keep the soul unstained. Take the dangers of the dance, how many and formi-

dable they are! Take warning from Holy Writ: "He that loveth the danger shall perish in it" (Ecclus. iii. 27). Your fall will come before you are aware of it, if you do not guard against these dangers and expose yourself to them.

You have heard when sorrow comes too late, hundreds have made the sad experiment. Perhaps some of you have experienced a similar sorrow over sin, because you have despised the law of God and listened to the allurements of the world. "Watch and pray."

PART II.

1. This sorrow is an abiding regret. It is abiding as regards past enjoyments. What is the duration of the pleasures of this world? They are like the rosebuds of early spring which open their petals to the sun in the morning, and when evening comes they droop, withered on the stalk. How long does the amusement of a dance last? Only one evening. How long does the fascination of a dangerous friendship last? A few weeks. Yet these fleeting pleasures are the cause of a life-long sorrow that will accompany you to the grave. For a spoonful of honey you will have to drink a cupful of wormwood; for a handful of roses you will have to walk on thorns for the rest of your days.

The sorrow is not only over bygone pleasures but over a lost happiness. A man who has frittered away some great happiness will mourn over it for a long time. Our first parents sorrowed for an exceptionally long lifetime over the paradise they lost. David sorrowed over his sin day and night; "My tears have been

my bread day and night" (Ps. xli. 4). When the Jews were carried into captivity, they could not forget their beloved country, they thought of Jerusalem with bitterness of soul. "Upon the waters of Babylon there we sat and wept when we remembered Sion" (Ps. cxxxvi. 1). If we lose the friendship of God by sin, we, too, will be pursued by sorrow and grief without end.

2. The sorrow which comes too late is of little use. It cannot make the past disappear, what is done cannot be made undone. Of what use is it to one to cry because of a misfortune that has befallen him? If you have, through your imprudence, undermined your health and are now at death's door, of what use is sorrow and grief? Likewise of what use can it be to lament because you have lost your innocence? Alas! innocence once gone does not return; purity of soul destroyed cannot be repaired; the wreath of virginity which is faded cannot be made to bloom again. "The hope of the wicked is as dust which is blown away by the wind; as a thin froth which is dispersed by the storm; as a smoke that is scattered abroad by the wind" (Wisd. v. 15).

Repentance that comes too late cannot bring consolation. Time may bring some alleviation to the keenness of the sorrow, but yet it will always abide in the soul. Contrition can only bring relief when it proceeds from grace, that is to say, when the sinner bewails his wrongdoings because by them he has offended God. Repentance of this nature affords consolation, because it brings with it the hope of forgiveness. "A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not de-

spise" (Ps. l. 19). "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts, O Lord, have given joy to my soul" (Ps. xciii. 19).

You have now heard what I mean by sorrow that comes too late. It is a sorrow that we feel for past misdeeds on account of an injury and a loss to ourselves, not because we have offended God. It is an abiding grief, it is a useless grief. Do not bring this regret upon yourselves. Spare yourselves the tears and lamentations by remaining faithful to God and by using the means of salvation which He places at your command. Do not forsake His ways and transgress His commandments. And as for the world, we know that it is sure to approach you with honeyed speeches, to offer you roses in abundance and make great promises of happiness. Beware lest you accept these gifts; beware lest you believe its speeches and promises. It will only lead you away from the path to true happiness into that of eternal misery. Once more let me exhort you to spare yourselves a repentance that comes too late. Avoid the occasions of sin; do not frequent the dancing-hall; be careful with whom you associate. Undesirable amusements are a pitfall for the unwary traveler; they are morasses in which the soul is stained and sullied. "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation." "He that thinketh himself to stand let him beware lest he fall." Slay the enemy before he becomes too strong; pluck out the weeds before they have gone to seed, lest the cockle spread through your negligence.

27. The Sorrowing Angel.

"*The angels shall fear, being affrighted.*"—Job xli. 6.

One of the most consoling truths of our holy religion is that God has appointed an angel for each one of us to be continually by our side, ever ready to extend his hands to guide and to protect us. "I will send My angel who shall go before thee in all thy goings, and bring thee to the place that I have prepared" (Gen. xxiii. 20). "The holy angels," says St. Augustine, "watch over us poor pilgrims of earth; they compassionate us, and by God's behest they come to our aid so that we may one day be able to return with them to heaven, their true country and ours." This same privilege is granted to you, Christian young women; you also have a guardian angel to direct you. Would that you never give him cause to weep over you! It is true, the angels enjoy the happiness of heaven and cannot feel any real sorrow or pain, yet they take the deepest interest in those committed to them, and according to our mode of understanding it, we may say that they weep over the sins of men. Let us to-day consider the angels sorrowing

I. In the hour of death;
II. In the hour of judgment.

PART I.

1. When I say that your angel weeps over you in the hour of your death, I mean your spiritual death. The spiritual death is the death of the soul. That death takes place when you commit a mortal sin, for at that moment you lose sanctifying grace by which the spiritual life of the soul is sustained. From that moment the soul is dead to God, it has become a lifeless branch on the heavenly vine, a flower of paradise which is withered and dried up. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). Sin kills the soul, hence it is called mortal sin. Your guardian angel weeps in the hour when you become guilty of sin; he weeps over your fall. This fall is truly sad, for by it all that God has done for the soul becomes useless; all the gifts which He has bestowed upon it are rendered futile, and the beauty of the soul is transformed into hideousness. "They that were brought up in scarlet have embraced the dung" (Lam. iv. 5). No wonder that the angel of God should weep at the grave of innocence, that he should weep over the first fatal transgression of the soul committed to his care. Love and grief cause the tears to flow, love for his foster-child, and grief at the offense committed against God.

He weeps not only over the first fall but over every subsequent one. A man who has fallen into sin can, through the mercy of God, rise again and obtain forgiveness. "Thou hast mercy upon all because Thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance" (Wisd. xi. 24). On the remission of sin which God grants, life is restored to the

soul that was dead; she becomes again the friend of God, the bride of the Most High. If, however, a second sin follows, the Spirit of God departs and the temple of God is again laid waste and made desolate. "From the daughter of Sion all her beauty is departed" (Lam. i. 6). Hence the good angel weeps over every sin that is committed by the soul entrusted to him. He weeps because he knows how terrible a thing sin is, and because he beholds his foster-child cast into the depth of misery. How is it with you in this respect? Has your guardian angel had occasion to weep over you? You have grown up in the fear and the love of God, you have blossomed as a lily in the sight of God. But perhaps you remember some occasion, some dance, some acquaintance, that has been the cause of grief to your angel. You went to confession, but perhaps you have not profited by your first fall, you put yourself again into the same danger, and you have fallen into sin again and again. How many tears has your guardian angel shed on your account? Perhaps he now stands mourning beside you; what must you do? Bid him wipe away his tears, leave the occasion of sin immediately; give up the employment that has become a source of sin; give up the company that is dragging you to hell. "Turn to the Lord and forsake thy sins" (Ecclus. xvii. 21). "Incline your ears and come to Me; hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the faithful mercies of David" (Is. lv. 3).

2. Your angel weeps over you in the hour of your bodily death. The hour comes for every one when this

frail mortal body sinks into the grave, its last resting-place. "I know that Thou wilt deliver me to death where a house is appointed for every one that liveth" (Job xxx. 23). Your angel is beside you in that hour, he looks into your pallid countenance, and tears fill his eyes, if you depart with but few merits.

Opportunity is afforded you every day to acquire treasures for eternity, since God vouchsafes to count as merit whatever is done out of love for Him. "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones, he shall not lose his reward" (Matt. x. 42). How sad to neglect sowing seed for an eternal harvest; how sad to neglect gathering the pearls with which your path is strewn. Your angel will have cause to weep, if in your last hour your hands are empty, if he sees how scanty provision you have made for the future, how few are the treasures which you have gathered. Still more reason has he to weep, if you depart out of this world, burdened with a heavy debt, grace misused, bad confessions made, thousands of talents wasted. With death comes the time of the harvest, and the command is given: "Thrust in thy sickle because the hour is come to reap, the harvest of the earth is ripe" (Apoc. xiv. 15). What sort of harvest will yours be? Dead works, ears of corn that are dried up, sins innumerable?

You will one day enter upon the death-agony. Perhaps you will be alone in that hour; but yet not alone, for your angel will be by your side. Will he weep over you or will he rejoice that you are to enter upon your reward? If now in your lifetime you pursue vanity, if you cannot bear to be without continual amusements

of a dangerous kind, he will certainly have reason to weep. If you love the world and seek its admiration you may be sure that he will weep. If you abuse the graces which you receive, if you add daily to your debt, he will weep over you then. The tears that he will weep at that moment will fall like live coals upon your heart. Do not let it come to this, but on this very day break the bonds that hold you fast in the way of sin. "Do penance, therefore, for this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps this thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts viii. 22).

PART II.

When you have breathed your last, your angel takes the disembodied spirit and presents it before the judgment-seat of God. This moment will be for him one of extreme sadness, if when weighed in the balance you are found wanting. He will weep

1. Over the loss of your soul. What then is lost when one loses his soul? A treasure of incomparable value. For this soul the Son of God became man and humbled Himself even to the death of the cross. He purchased it with a great price, He washed it with His own blood. All that God did for this soul in the threefold work of the creation, the redemption and sanctification is rendered void, and the soul itself, destined for the joys of heaven, is consigned to eternal perdition.

The angel knows, moreover, what is in store for that soul. "The chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matt. iii. 12). It will be cast into "the pool burning with fire and brimstone" (Apoc. xxi. 8). The angel

from whom the mysteries of eternity are not hid is aware of the awful punishment, of the unspeakable misery, to which the soul that dies in the hatred of God is consigned. Hence he weeps over the child of his trust, and he listens with profound grief to the terrible sentence passed upon it.

2. The angel also weeps over his useless labors. Angels are ministering spirits sent to minister to them that shall receive the inheritance of salvation (Hebr. i. 14). "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. xc. 11, 12).

See how much interest the angels take in those that are committed to them. All their labors and pains, however, go for nothing, if the soul which they have guarded is condemned by the eternal Judge. All the protection extended to her is now in vain; in vain are the many petitions they sent up to heaven in her behalf; in vain are the graces obtained for her; in vain are the counsels and admonitions. The angel grieves over the loss of these efforts made to save that soul.

To-day we have looked upon the guardian angel weeping over the loss of his foster-child. He weeps at the time of its spiritual death; he weeps at the time of judgment. Take heed lest you occasion your angel such sadness, his tears would fall heavily upon your soul. They would burn into it like burning coals. Rather strive to cause him joy by your humility, your piety, your purity. "Behold, I will send My angel who shall go before thee—take notice of him and hear his

voice" (Ex. xxiii. 20, 21). Listen to St. Bernard: "There are many means whereby we may please the angels and cause them joy, when they see us clothed with the virtues of sobriety, chastity, voluntary poverty, when they perceive that we send up frequent aspirations to heaven, that we pray with tearful and heartfelt devotion. Above all, in their character of angels of peace, they desire us to cultivate the spirit of unity and concord."

28. The Fate of One Condemned.

"*Fear seized upon me, and trembling, and all my bones were affrighted.*"—Job iv. 14.

We read in the Gospel that a man without the customary dress stole in among the guests of a royal marriage feast. When the king entered the banquet hall he went up to the intruder and said: "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" He was silent and made no answer, whereupon the king said to the servants: "Bind his hands and his feet and cast him into exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxii. 12, 13). This parable tells us that only those who are arrayed in the wedding-garment of sanctifying grace can take part in the marriage feast of the Lamb. In Baptism, God clothes us in this robe, and happy is the soul who presents it unspotted at the last hour, when she is called to the judgment-seat of God. Unhappily this garment is often defiled and spotted, and when such a soul crosses the threshold of eternity a terrible future is before her. Let us to-day, in spirit, follow such a soul and contemplate her as she stands before her Judge. She stands there

I. In full consciousness of her guilt;

II. In certain anticipation of punishment.

PART I.

1. The soul that appears before the judgment-seat of God with the robe of innocence soiled, sees all that God has done for her. God bestowed on her the most excellent gifts, the robe of sanctifying grace, shining like burnished gold. "How beautiful art thou, my love, how beautiful art thou!" (Cant. iv. 1). "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun?" (Cant. vi. 9.) Sanctifying grace is the bridal dress of the spouse of Christ, it is the brightest ornament that the soul can possess. It is a free gift of God; "It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God who showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16). By his own power no one can come to the state of grace, since it exceeds the order of nature; it must be a gift of God. God does not give this grace indiscriminately; many sit in the shadow of death and error.

This the soul recognizes in the hour of judgment, when she sees the spots on that garment caused by the defilement of sin. She sees that God had bestowed upon her a gift of priceless value, and had placed within her reach the means of preserving it. Divine grace can be lost; "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. iv. 7). "He that thinketh himself to stand let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). We are assailed by temptations from within and from without, yet God does not leave us without His assistance to overcome them. He speaks to us by the voice of conscience, He gives us His angel as a protector, He warns

us by the admonitions of parents and teachers, He guides us by His holy Church.

These truths come before the mind of the soul that stands before her Judge. She perceives that God has overwhelmed her with kindness. The whole plan of the divine mercy is laid before her eyes, the whole extent of God's mercy to her is revealed to her.

2. She sees also what she has done. She sees the slight value she attached to these great gifts. The soul, freed from the prison of the body, sees all things in a new light, she estimates all things in the light of truth. Hence it is that at that moment she understands the value of grace and the error of having appreciated it so little during life. She sees what little care she took to avoid the occasions of sin, how she turned a deaf ear to good advice, how she was more anxious about her bodily welfare than about that of her soul. She sees how she threw away that gift for a mere trifle, for a flattering speech, for a familiar caress, for a momentary pleasure. In the hour of judgment, her eyes will be opened, and she will recognize the folly of bartering the grace of God, purchased by the precious blood of the Redeemer, for a thing of earth.

Great indeed is her guilt. Ask yourselves, each one of you, what God has done for you and what you have done. God has manifested the excess of His love and compassion, and you have shown the excess of levity and ingratitude. Of this you will be fully aware on the day of reckoning, if you do not realize it now. If you are now careless, what will be your sentiments on that day? What are the feelings of a criminal as he stands

before the judge and conviction stares him in the face? "Fear seized upon me, and trembling, and all my bones were affrighted" (Job iv. 14). "The fear of death is fallen upon me; fear and trembling are come upon me" (Ps. liv. 5).

PART II.

1. The soul standing before her Judge, conscious of mortal sin, sees the sword suspended over her head, and she knows that she cannot escape from it. The time of mercy is past, the hour of retribution is come. The sword of divine justice flashes before her unhappy eyes, and it will be impossible for her to elude its blow. In vain are all excuses. It will avail her nothing to say: Lord, I could not keep Thy law, the temptations were too great for me. It will not avail to say: Lord, robbers fell upon me and stripped me of the precious garment of innocence. It will not avail to say: Lord, I am a poor frail creature, and I forgot Thee. Nor will it avail to say: Others did as I did, and sinned against Thee. It will be of no avail to cast yourself at the feet of Jesus and cry for mercy, for the time of mercy is gone by. To all these excuses the Lord will say: I offered you My grace, I died for you, I begged you to desist from sin, I sent My ministers to warn you. You turned a deaf ear to all My pleadings, and now the day of justice has arrived.

In vain are all promises of amendment. You cannot say: Lord, let me return to earth again and I will serve You with scrupulous exactness, I will do penance in sack-cloth and ashes. I will never again set foot in a

place of danger; I will shut myself up from the world and its enticements. I will scourge myself daily, a board shall be my resting-place, I will fast on bread and water. Your promises of penance come too late. "If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in what place it shall fall, there shall it be" (Ecclus. xi. 3).

2. The blow will come inevitably. Almighty God is equally great in His justice as in His mercies. The divine wrath condemns the sinner who has rejected His mercy to sufferings that are terrible but just. "Thou shalt make them as an oven of fire in the time of Thine anger" (Ps. xx. 10). They shall be punished by a "fire that burneth even to the lowest hell" (Deut. xxxii. 22). "The chaff He shall burn with unquenchable fire" (Matt. iii. 12). The avenging sword of God will descend upon them, and "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The sword will strike its fatal blow, when the Lord pronounces the sentence and says: "Depart from Me into everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41).

What a terrible thing it would be were any of you to be summoned before the tribunal of God, unprovided with the nuptial garment of divine grace! How terrible to stand there and see the garment which God gave you, besmeared by the mire of the world! "Fears shall terrify the wicked on every side" (Job xviii. 11). Are you in danger of this? You are indeed in danger of this, if you have lost the innocence of your childhood, if you have been guilty of mortal sin. Think well on it; it is better to fear now than to be condemned at

the time of judgment. Think of the dangerous friendships into which you have perhaps entered, think of the dangers that lie in wait for you on all sides. Have you, perhaps, in your confessions, passed over certain things, impure imaginings, desires, actions, striving to convince yourself that there was nothing seriously wrong in them? Have you not promised your confessor, again and again, to give up certain occasions of sin, which you have never given up? Were you really sincere in those promises? Perhaps if you could look into your soul and see it as it stands before the eye of God, you would see it clad in a robe, not of innocence, but of defilement and sin. Do not say: I will amend some day and save my soul. "Boast not of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what the day to come may bring forth" (Prov. xxvii. 1). Death is a deceiver, he comes like a thief in the night. Millions are now in hell who proposed to amend in the future which never came. Say, rather: I will begin to-day, and begin at once to do penance. "Unless you shall do penance, you shall likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 3). Remember you have not received any divine assurance of the future, the present alone is yours. God has promised remission and forgiveness to those that do penance, but He has not promised to give them an opportunity in the future. Wherefore, grasp the hand that is extended to you now, before it is too late; this very day, take the first step towards God. Confess your sins, and give up the occasions of them.

To those who have preserved their Baptismal innocence, who have never defiled it by mortal sin, I say:

Hold fast to the treasure which you possess: "Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation." "Blessed," says St. Ephrem, "is the man who keeps the thought of God before his mind. He will live on earth like an angel in heaven, and will serve the Lord in His holy fear and love."

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